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NATURAL CAUSATION

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An Essay in Four Parts

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BY

C. E. PLUMPTRE

AUTHOR OF "GENERAL SKETCH OF THE HISTORY OF PANTHEISM," "GIORDANO BRUNO, A TALE OF THE SIXTEENTH CENTURY," ETC.

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"*Know, so far as is permitted thee, that Nature is in all things uniform.*"
—Quoted from the Pythagorean Scriptures by Professor Clifford.

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To
the Memory of
my Father,
who was Unfailing in his Encouragement and Sympathy,
and in
his Interest in my previous Works,
I dedicate this Volume.

March 29th, 1888.

PREFATORY NOTE.

I HAVE grouped together the four Essays in this volume under the one title, "Natural Causation," because they all pertain to one great subject—Natural Law. But they were not all written at the same time. The second Essay, that on "Philosophical Necessity," has been the longest written, and originally appeared in the October number of *The Modern Review*, 1880. It is reprinted here with alterations so slight as hardly to require mention. The other three, though written at some intervals, appear in print here for the first time.

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NATURAL CAUSATION.

I.

THE DOCTRINE OF DESIGN AS VIEWED FROM THE STAND-POINT OF EVOLUTION.

"I seek after Truth, by which no man ever yet was injured."
Marcus Aurelius Antoninus.

IT was, I think, the Italian philosopher Giordano Bruno, who was the first to point to a fact that even now is scarcely sufficiently recognised; namely, that what are called the olden ages, the ancient times, are in reality the early ages, the youthful times; and conversely, that what in modern parlance are spoken of as recent ages, are in reality the elder ages. The world in this latter part of the nineteenth century, for instance, is older by three centuries than when Bruno made the remark; and he, a somewhat violent opponent of Aristotle, made it because he was rebuked for his presumption in venturing to question the authority of one who had lived so many centuries before himself—the implication of course being that because Aristotle had lived

so much earlier than Bruno, therefore, and by that cause, must his opinion be of proportionately greater value.

Now, in reality, the exact converse of this is the case. Other things equal, a man of the mental calibre of an Aristotle, born in the nineteenth century, would certainly write now as he would not have been able to write then: his environment being different, his writings would be different. I venture to call attention to this remark of Bruno, because the fact to which he has pointed belongs to that class of facts so unquestionably true as to have escaped attention; a certain amount of controversy, I think, being required to enable a fact to be fully impressed upon the mind. Doubtless, the implications to be drawn from this truth are, like those from other truths, capable of being abused. I do not wish to imply that, because a certain theory is the outcome of a late development, it is to be accepted as necessarily true and requiring no investigation. I only wish to urge that there is a greater probability that a theory born in such an age will be truer than one belonging to a cruder stage in the history of thought.

The doctrine of Design, by which I mean special creation of natural objects for the benefit of man, does not belong exclusively to one particular religion, nor to one particular nation; but it does belong to a crude and undeveloped period of man's knowledge. The doctrine of Evolution, on the other hand, though dimly foreshadowed in some of the earlier philosophies and religions, may yet rightfully be called the outcome of the nineteenth century—a century pre-eminent among other centuries for its scientific discoveries, its scientific instruments, and for the accuracy of its men of science; a century, too, in which the means of

travel have been enormously developed, so that the religious and scientific theories of various nations can be dealt with comparatively. And the comparative method—scarcely possible prior to this century—has shown itself by its results in all branches of science to be second to none.

It is the purport of the present essay upon Natural Causation to examine—reverently indeed, but also impartially—into the general arguments for and against the doctrine of Design. Is man a creature altogether distinct from other objects in Nature? Was the sun created in order to provide him with light by day? Were the moon and stars created solely to light him by night? Is language a divine gift? Was the Christian religion supernaturally revealed to him, and essentially and altogether distinct from the religions of other nations?

In this short essay of four brief sections I do not, indeed, propose to deal with all these questions. In the present section it is my intention to deal generally with the subject as a whole, and in the three succeeding sections to limit myself to those particular aspects of the question that more profoundly influence our future actions and daily life.

The supporters both of the doctrines of Design and Evolution are alike in starting with an Infinite First Existence that is above finite comprehension. The believer in Design assumes an External Creator without beginning, without end; from whose will alone has sprung the entire creation. The believer in Evolution starts with the assumption of an infinite, eternal Matter, also without beginning or end, constant in its quantity, changing alone its form, and which is the cause and composition of every natural object. There are two classes among the accepters of the doctrine of

Evolution. One, which I certainly think is in the minority, that is materialistic in the atheistic sense of the word, seeing in naked matter nothing more than that brute substance that matter is considered to be in the minds of most religious people. But the other class, among which I reckon myself, reverence Matter as something altogether past finding out, in which is latent not only every form of body, but every form of mind. In the words of the poet Goethe, they look upon matter as the "living garment of God," whose existence is not comprehensible to man. In the words of Professor Tyndall, confessing their own ignorance, they say, If you ask whence is this "Matter" we have no answer. "But if the materialist is confounded and science rendered dumb, who else is prepared with a solution? To whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed? Let us lower our heads and acknowledge our ignorance, priest and philosopher, one and all." *

But though alike in being obliged to postulate an Infinite Eternal Existence wholly past finding out as the cause of all things, here the believers in Design and Evolution part company. He who believes in a Creator working from without, creating something out of nothing, bringing by His command myriads of worlds into existence and launching them into their several places, commits himself to a series of inconceivabilities instead of to one alone—the creation of *something* out of *nothing*, when fully realised, being quite as difficult of comprehension as the existence of the Creator Himself. Moreover it vouchsafes us no interpretation (save that of caprice) why some planets and stars should be so much larger than others; why some planets should have

* "Fragments of Science," 5th edition, p. 421.

many moons, and others none; still further, why certain portions of the heavens should be crowded with stars and constellations, and another portion by comparison well-nigh empty. But the Nebular Hypothesis can, as it seems to me, in a measure explain these difficulties.

If, as that hypothesis assumes, matter that was once evenly diffused through space has, in obedience to understood laws, undergone a process of concentration, and afterwards, through the medium of other laws, broken up into bodies of various sizes, then those spaces where the matter in its diffused state had originally extended to, must after the concentration of the matter be as proportionately bare of stars as the other portions are crowded.

The doctrine of Evolution, then, unlike the doctrine of Design, has only to start with its one mystery, viz., the existence of Matter and its concomitant property Force. How these came to exist it presumes not to say. But that they do exist is a fact obvious to all. And, given their existence, the entire universe, so far as we know it, becomes capable of interpretation. Let us take for instance, as our first illustration, the genesis of the Solar System.

The great principle underlying the law of Evolution is, that the homogeneous changes by slow and almost imperceptible degrees into the heterogeneous, the simple into the complex. And if the Nebular Hypothesis be true, that hypothesis is but one embodiment among many of the universality of that law. If we go further and ask, *why**

* It must be remembered that the Evolution hypothesis presumes not to discuss the Why in the teleogical sense. It simply relates to the proximate or immediate causes; not to the Efficient or First Cause, of which it knows nothing.

should the simple develop into the complex? the answer is that every active force produces more than one change; or, in other words, multitudinous effects arise from one cause.*

In 1755 the great philosopher Kant put forth the doctrine that the whole universe inconceivable ages ago consisted of a gaseous chaos; and this theory was, as is well known, further developed by Laplace and Herschel. Well! assuming that the matter of which the sun and planets consists was once in a diffused form, by the gravitation of its atoms a gradual concentration would result. But this would not be the only effect. At the same time would also result contrast in density and temperature between the interior and exterior of the mass. Rotary movements would also arise, and their velocities would vary according to their several distances from the centre. In this way, it is held, the solar system has been evolved. No one world has been separately created. And this indeed follows as a corollary from a doctrine accepted now by all men of science, *i.e.*, the Indestructibility of Matter. Since matter is constant in its quantity and changes only in its form, it follows that worlds have been moulded into their present number, their present shape, out of matter already existing.

The general nature of Laplace's theory is, I suppose pretty well known, viz., that the solar system originally consisted of a vast rotating spheroid which extended beyond the region of Neptune; that as, in conformance

* For fuller explanation of this, see Mr. Spencer's admirable essay, "Progress: its Law and Cause," in his "Essays, Scientific, Political, and Speculative," vol. i. Williams and Norgate.

with known laws, the spheroid contracted, its rate of rotation would be necessarily increased; that through its centrifugal force rings would be thrown off, which by contraction would in turn become rotating masses. These in their turn would throw off other rings, which would in like manner become rotating spheroids. And thus have arisen planets and their satellites, while from the central mass has been evolved the sun.

This *à priori* reasoning of Laplace has received singular confirmation from the practical experiments of Dr. Plateau. Protecting so far as possible a mass of fluid from external causes, and making it rotate with sufficient velocity, he then shows that this mass breaks up naturally into detached rings, which on their part concentrate into spheroids which will turn on their axes in the same direction with the central mass.

But Mr. Spencer has called attention to another fact which upon the hypothesis of Design has no interpretation, while it is a singular confirmation of the Nebular Hypothesis, viz., that each set of satellites bears in miniature the same relation to its planet that the planets bear to the sun; thus showing that there must be a physical connection in their origin.

"On progressing from the outside of the solar system to its centre," he says,* "we see that there are four large external planets and four internal ones which are comparatively small. A like contrast holds between the outer and inner satellites in every case. Among the four satellites of Jupiter the parallel is maintained as well as the

* "The Nebular Hypothesis," in the first volume of his "Collected Essays," pp. 271, 272.

comparative smallness of the number allows; the two outer ones are the largest, and the two inner ones the smallest. According to the most recent observations made by Mr. Lassell, the like is true of the four satellites of Uranus. In the case of Saturn, who has eight secondary planets revolving around him, the likeness is still more close in arrangement as in number. The three outer satellites are large, the inner ones are small; and the contrasts of size are here much greater between the largest, which is nearly as big as Mars, and the smallest, which is with difficulty discovered even by the best telescopes."

But the Nebular Hypothesis has another support to which I should like to draw attention. It has been pointed out by the writer * of the article on the Nebular Theory in the new edition of the Encyclopædia Britannica that the stupendous daily outpour of heat from the sun at the present time is really, when properly studied, a profound argument in support of the nebular theory. The amount of the sun's heat has been estimated, and it is found that our earth receives less than *one two-thousand-millionth* part of the whole radiation. Now what supplies this heat?

"The truth about the sun's heat," says the writer, "appears to be that the sun is really an incandescent body losing heat; but that the operation of cooling is immensely retarded owing to a curious circumstance due jointly to the stupendous mass of the sun and to a remarkable law of heat. It is of course well known that if energy disappears in one form it reappears in another, and this principle applied to the sun will explain the famous difficulty.

* R. S. Ball, LL.D.

"As the sun loses heat it contracts, and every pair of particles are nearer each other than they were before. The energy due to their separation is thus less in the contracted state than in the original state, and as that energy cannot be lost it must reappear in heat. The sun is thus slowly contracting; but as it contracts it gains heat by the operation of the law just referred to, and thus the further cooling and further contraction of the sun is protracted, and the additional heat obtained is radiated away. In this way we can reconcile the fact that the sun is certainly losing heat with the fact that the change in the temperature has not been large enough to be perceived within historic times.

"It can be shown that the sun is at present contracting, so that its diameter diminishes four miles every century. This is of course an inappreciable distance when compared with the diameter of the sun, which is nearly a million of miles, but the significance for our present purpose depends upon the fact that this contraction is always taking place. A thousand years ago the sun must have had a diameter forty miles greater than at present, ten thousand years ago that diameter must have been four hundred miles more than it is now, and so on. We cannot perhaps assert that the same rate is to be continued for many centuries, but it is plain that the further we look into past time the greater must the sun have been."

But perhaps the most comprehensible and obvious proof of this theory is that in the case of Saturn; Laplace describes the well-known rings of Saturn as "extant witnesses of my hypothesis." Saturn also possesses, what has only of late years been discovered, a *nebulous* ring, through

which his body is beheld as through a mist. We can imagine with what delight Laplace would have hailed this discovery.

Now have the supporters of the doctrine of Design any interpretation of these facts to offer? If the moon were created in order to give the inhabitants of the earth light by night, why (if the other planets are uninhabited) should they have moons at all? Or say that the supporters of the doctrine of Design are willing to concede that the other planets may be inhabited, will they explain why the inner moons should be the smaller ones? or why Uranus, which is twice as far away from the sun as Saturn, should have but half as many moons? Or why Mars, which is considerably farther from the sun than we are, should have no moons at all? Upon the mechanical theory of the universe all these perplexities are capable of solution; but upon the mechanical theory alone.

From the Solar System, considered in its general aspect, let us turn to one of its members, our Earth.

I believe it is conceded now by all geologists—of whatever religious opinions—that our earth was at first a mass either of molten or nebulous matter, probably the latter, and that it took an immense period of time—in all likelihood millions of years—before it cooled down sufficiently to allow of life appearing upon it, and that when life did at first appear, it was in the form of such vegetation as could only flourish in a climate of very high temperature.

The five great main divisions of the organic history of the earth are called the primordial, primary, secondary, tertiary, and quaternary epochs. The first and longest is the primordial epoch, or the era of the Tangle Forests. This

epoch is probably longer than the four others put together. Three systems of strata belong to this epoch, and the approximate depth of these strata is computed to amount to 70,000 feet. The primary epoch, or the era of Fern Forests, has also three systems of strata belonging to it, and the thickness of these strata is said to amount to about 42,000 feet. The secondary epoch, or the era of Pine Forests, is also divided into three great periods, but the average thickness of these three systems amounts only to about 15,000 feet. The tertiary epoch, or era of Leafed Forests, is also divided into three periods, but the thickness of their strata is only about 3,000 feet, while the quaternary epoch, or era of civilisation, in comparison with the length of the four other epochs almost vanishes into nothing; though (as Professor Haeckel says), with a comical conceit, we usually call *its* record the "history of the world."*

It is needless to say that, although we can, in our present state of geological knowledge, apply only relative and not absolute measurements of time, still enormous thickness of strata and enormous length of time go together. The time devoted to the formation of the primordial epoch was almost certainly longer than the time devoted to the four succeeding epochs altogether. It seems probable that many thousand millions of years were required to deposit masses of strata amounting to 70,000 feet. In the first portion of this primordial epoch nothing seems to have lived save that lowest group of plants called Tangles or Algæ; but in the two later strata belonging to this same primordial epoch have been found remains of some animals which, like the tangles, must have lived in water. They are called *acrania*,

* Haeckel's "History of Creation," vol. ii., p. 17, English edition.

or skull-less, and from them it is supposed fishes have been developed.

Upon the hypothesis that the earth was solely made for man, how can its supporters account for the fact that for millions of years only the lowest forms of vegetable and animal life existed? Were the universe made for man, and man to praise and glorify the Creator, how was it that for untold millions of years not only did man not exist, but not a creature sufficiently endowed with sentient life to be even capable of happiness? Regarded from the teleogical point of view, whether that point of view be the happiness of the creature or the glory of the Creator, these untold millions of years must be regarded as gigantic waste.

But upon the hypothesis of Evolution all these seemingly inexplicable difficulties become capable of solution. If the nebular hypothesis be true, it follows as an *à priori* deduction from it that when this earth broke away from its central mass, from which afterwards was evolved the sun, it must have been in a nebulous or molten state; and what *à priori* the nebular hypothesis shows would be the case, geologists *à posteriori* have shown has been the case. I believe all geologists concur in saying that the original state of our earth was one of incandescence. Again, if it be asked why should so many years elapse before the earth should be the habitat of life, the answer is, life could not appear till the earth had parted with a certain portion of her heat, and that this internal heat was at first of such an inconceivable intensity that the counteraction of air and other external influences were for a time inappreciable. When life at first did appear it was, as I have said, only under such forms as belong to a climate of exceedingly high temperature.

There is still another difficulty quite inexplicable upon the hypothesis of Design, viz., the alternate Glacial Epochs in the north and south. In a remarkable paper published in 1864, largely quoted from by Mr. James Geikie in his "Great Ice Age," and also alluded to by Darwin in his "Origin of Species," Mr. Croll has pointed out that glacial periods, lasting for thousands of years, must have alternated with equally prolonged periods of genial conditions. The last glacial epoch must have begun some 240,000 years ago, and terminated about 80,000 years ago, comprising therefore a period of 160,000 years; the cold being most intense about thirty or forty thousand years after the glacial epoch had commenced. Mr. Croll has attempted to show that this glacial condition of climate is the result of various physical causes, brought into operation by an increase in the eccentricity of the earth's orbit. But as this interpretation has not passed beyond the domain of theory, I will not dwell further upon it here; but will content myself with recommending Mr. Geikie's most interesting work upon the "Great Ice Age" to any reader anxious for a closer acquaintance with the subject. But, whatever the interpretation, of the fact itself there is no doubt. As Darwin has well said, "We have evidence of almost every conceivable kind, organic and inorganic, that within a very recent geological period Central Europe and North America suffered under an arctic climate. The ruins of a house burnt by fire do not tell their tale more plainly than do the mountains of Scotland and Wales, with their scored flanks, polished surfaces, and perched boulders, of the icy streams with which their valleys were lately filled." I need scarcely say that during these alternate glacial epochs of such

immense duration, the parts affected by them must have been as desolate, as absolutely devoid of life, as Greenland is now. Has the hypothesis of Design any interpretation to offer?

We see then that the genesis of the solar system and the formation of the earth are not difficult of explanation through Natural Causation, while upon the hypothesis of Design they are absolutely without explanation.

I turn now to a much more difficult, as well as a much more vexed question: the origin and preservation of Life.

Some ten years ago evolutionists seemed likely to be divided into two contending parties: the one—consisting for the most part of the younger and more ardent members—warmly embracing the belief in spontaneous generation, and adducing as a ground for their belief that they had conducted experiments in which life was actually spontaneously generated before their eyes. The other, soberer, and for the most part older members, though willingly conceding that from the *à priori* point of view spontaneous generation fitted in with their general theory of evolution, yet loving truth better than mere victory, acknowledged somewhat sorrowfully that they had discovered no proof of it. They investigated the experiments of the so-called discoverers of spontaneous generation, and invariably found them wanting. Air had never been entirely excluded; and with the admission of air had probably been admitted organic germs from which had been evolved the minute organisms, too hastily concluded to be spontaneous generations.

This conflict of opinions, though somewhat fiery while it lasted, has, I think, nearly died away. Most evolutionists,

it seems to me, have come round to the conclusion of their more sober apostles, that there is no present proof of spontaneous generation.

But while honestly conceding this to be the case, let me also say that I think the opponents of evolution have greatly exaggerated the importance of this concession. In a spirit the reverse of philosophic, they have confused "*non*-proven" with "*dis-proven.*" Never of very great value, a negative, in the present case, is of even less than average value, because the changes of temperature through which the earth has passed have been so enormous that it may well be held that life, though entirely incapable of being generated in the present condition of our earth, might have been generated naturally and without difficulty when the climate was of enormously higher temperature. Every chemist knows that certain elements will only combine under certain conditions; and it is quite within the limits of possibility, or even indeed probability, that conditions which are now wanting, in an earlier stage of the formation of our earth might have been existing,* and that from a subtle combination of inorganic elements an organic cell could have been evolved.

One thing at least is certain, that if the supporters of the doctrine of the natural evolution of life can only adduce at present imperfect proofs of it, the supporters of special

* The word "*Spontaneous* Generation" is not a happy one, *spontaneity* implying *suddenness* and for the most part that which arises without cause. Such readers as are desirous of learning what very strong probabilities there are in favour of "generation by evolution," as Mr. Spencer happily terms it, are advised to study a letter Mr. Spencer has added in the shape of an appendix to the first volume of his "Principles of Biology."

creation can, as has been well said, "adduce no proof at all." Throughout the entire solar system, so far as our investigations have gone, there has been no creation, no destruction of matter—only change of form; matter disappears in one place only to reappear in another. From the beginning of life upon this globe we know of no new life without antecedent life; no preservation of life save through the agency of matter already existing. The vegetable requires air, earth, and water; the animal requires the vegetable; the man, the vegetable or animal, or both; everywhere the sum of matter is the same; the death of one form is the birth of another. Annihilation, or the disappearance of something into nothing, being as inconceivable as creation, or the formation of nothing into something.

And can we stop here? Is not Mind, too, another form, though at bottom an entirely mysterious form, of this same wonderful matter? Are not madness and genius and idiocy all matters of heredity or environment? Do we know of any mind apart from matter? Must we not admit that our minds largely depend upon the formation of our brains, and these again are largely due to ancestry? Is it not true that our best mental work is done in maturity, when our bodies are in a state of physical vigour; that as old age comes upon us mental decay comes also; and that infants in the first few days of life have absolutely no mind at all? If we fast too much we see visions and dream dreams; if we eat too much we become languid, and generally incapable of rapid thought. If we drink stimulants in any excess the effect upon the mental and moral character is unfortunately too well known. And as matter acts upon mind, so does mind upon matter. Every physician can tell when a man has been overworking his brain. Every-

where we see transformation; but no creation—no destruction.

In like manner what we have seen to be the case with Matter applies also to Force. The correlation of the forces, or Conservation of Energy, as it is sometimes called, is among the grand discoveries of this century. Heat, light, electricity, chemical action, as well as nervous and muscular action, are interchangeable; but not only have they the power under certain conditions of producing one another, but it has been discovered beyond controversy, I believe, that there is exact equivalence in quantity between the phenomena that have disappeared and those which have been produced, insomuch that if the process be reversed, precisely the same quantity that had disappeared will reappear. Thus (to cite a much-quoted illustration), the amount of heat which will raise the temperature of a pound of water one degree of the thermometer will, if expended, for example, in the expansion of steam, lift a weight of 772 pounds one foot, or a weight of one pound 772 feet. The establishment of this comprehensive law has led many scientific men to believe that it is a misnomer to talk of *forces;* for now that it is known that each of these so-called *forces* can be changed into the other, it seems probable that there is but one force, constant in its quantity, changing only its form. This force it is held is in reality motion. The conservation or persistence of force is, more probably, the conservation of motion.*

But now from the doctrines of the Persistence of Force and Indestructibility of Matter follows a corollary which I think has not received sufficient attention, viz., that

* See J. S. Mill's chapter on the Law of Causation in the first volume of his "System of Logic," ninth edition.

great complexity in quality will be attended with a certain deficiency in quantity; that is, as functions become highly complex they become specialised. And this will account for a fact that upon the hypothesis of Design is absolutely without interpretation, *i.e.*, that very low forms of animal life have much greater power of repairing severe injuries received than have the higher animals. Mr. Spencer has called attention to the fact that if that very lowly organised creature called the *Planaria* has its body broken up and its gullet detached, this will for a while continue to perform its function when called upon just as though it were in its place: a fragment of the creature's own body placed in the gullet will be propelled through it or swallowed by it.* And Professor Huxley has remarked upon the wonderful power of reproducing lost parts possessed by newts. Cut off the legs, the tail, the jaws, separately or altogether, and these parts not only grow again, but the redintegrated limb is formed on the same type as those which were lost. The new jaw or leg is a newt s, and never by any accident more like that of a frog.†

Now, since a child's well-being is presumably of greater importance than a newt's, will the supporters of Design explain how it is that if a child by some accident loses his legs, he will have to remain without legs to the day of his death, while the newt easily gains fresh ones? Or let us suppose that our supporter of the doctrine of Design is in a railway accident, and has at the same time a portion of his hair cut off and his arm torn from the elbow. We all know that his hair will almost certainly grow again, and that his

* Spencer's "Principles of Biology," vol ii., pp. 365, 366.

† Huxley's "Lay Sermons," pp. 261, 262.

arm most certainly will not. How can we account for this upon the hypothesis of Design? Whether a man's hair is an inch or two shorter or longer is a matter almost of indifference, but, both for his own personal happiness as well as for the sake of usefulness to his fellows, it is a matter of great importance that he shall not go minus an arm for the rest of his life. Upon the mechanical theory of the universe this is not difficult of interpretation. The composition of an arm being, with its nerves, its muscles, its blood-vessels, an exceedingly complex thing, therefore an arm has no power of reproducing itself. The hair being, relatively, a very simple thing, easily reproduces itself.

I am dwelling more upon the grand principles of the law of Evolution than upon the details so warmly insisted upon by its supporters. And I do so advisedly. Interesting as these details are, it seems to me that if we once grasp the full meaning of the Indestructibility of Matter, the Persistence of Force, the gradual growth of the homogeneous into the heterogeneous, the entire dependence of existing life upon antecedent life, the laws of Heredity, of Variety; the details usually cited in support of evolution are by no means essential to it. Their chief purpose, I think, is to show the weakness of the Special Creation hypothesis. Then, indeed, I might ask why the guinea-pig should have teeth which are shed before it is born; or why parasites should number about one-half of the animal species; why entozoa, for instance, which can only live within the bodies of creatures more highly organised than themselves—including man himself—and therefore more capable of happiness or misery, should then multiply to such an enormous extent that they generally kill the

creature they inhabit and, indirectly, therefore kill themselves? These are questions, indeed, which the hypothesis of Special Creation is inadequate to meet. But suppose that there were no parasites on the face of the earth, and suppose guinea-pigs did not possess fœtal teeth, the doctrine of Evolution would be unaffected, so long as these grand principles I have enumerated cannot be disproved. If, therefore, I do not attach much weight to the positive details, I need scarcely say that I attach less weight to the negative details. The fact that certain transitional forms have not yet been discovered seems to me to have had an exaggerated importance attached to it, not only by the opponents of the hypothesis of evolution, but even by some of the supporters themselves—especially when we consider that the portions of the earth that have been geologically investigated are, relatively speaking, insignificant. That when these transitional forms shall come to the light, as they almost certainly will, they will doubtless be of the keenest interest to the scientific mind, I do not deny. But for all that, he who would disprove the doctrine of evolution should endeavour to do so, as it appears to me, by attacking the principles rather than the details.

I must now approach a subject that I fear may be displeasing to some among my readers; but yet, to the honest searcher for truth, a subject too important to be passed by, viz., if the universe has been naturally evolved and not supernaturally created, have we any reason to believe that the laws of nature will be modified in compliance with the wishes or prayers of man?

There are two methods of investigating this subject, viz., the *à priori* method, or reasoning from the inherent proba-

bility of the case; and the *à posteriori* method, or reasoning from the actual experimental proofs adduced in confirmation of it. Let us deal with the *à priori* method first.

We have just seen in the sketch that I have given of the history of our globe what a recent inhabitant of the earth is Man. We have seen, too, what a comparatively insignificant member of the solar system is our earth. But we have not seen yet how relatively dwarfed becomes that system itself among the myriads of countless systems of which this is but one. Well, certainly in that system, and probably in all the systems, the laws that are in existence at this moment upon our earth rule there also and have ruled from all time, so far as we are able to recognise Time. Between all these systems there seems to be a physical connection; and he who would expect a great abeyance of law to take place in obedience to his wishes should first try to realise what such an abeyance would really imply. That great law of gravitation, for instance, if suspended even for a moment, think what would follow! Again, let us not forget that many of the effects that are but now beginning to press themselves upon our notice have arisen from causes, some of which perhaps are older than the historic recollections of man. On a brilliant starlight night let us lift our eyes and gaze into the heavens. The dark sky above us seems crowded with orbs of light. Astronomy has made us familiar with the fact that the radiance of these various orbs that thrills us with its mystic beauty left its several habitations many years ago—in some cases hundreds of years ago, and in others even thousands of years ago. Then calling to aid that wonderful power of imagination by which we are able to pass from the seen to the unseen, let us try to

realise that what we now see is, through the imperfectness of our vision, but an insignificant portion of what is to be seen. According to Humboldt, there are certain nebulous masses only to be viewed through colossal telescopes, so far distant that a ray of light would probably require millions of years before it could reach our earth. And yet, how little we can realise after all! Not by our most strenuous concentration, nor by our most impassioned imagination, can we grasp what no telescope can teach us! We cannot conceive of that which has no boundary; but as little can we conceive of that which is bounded by nothing, and with nothing beyond. This much only we know: that this earth is as a drop in a boundless ocean, but not apart from the ocean. It is of it and because of it. If we fully realise what is meant by the doctrine of the Indestructibility of Matter, if we open our eyes to the full significance of the revelations of the spectroscope, we may be at least certain of this one fact—that our earth is but an infinitesimal part of one great Whole. Is it likely that a fragment of a fragment shall direct that Whole from its course?

So far from it being irreligious or irreverent to disbelieve that our prayers will modify the laws of the universe, it seems to me that the truer reverence, the higher religion, is to recognise our presumption in daring to expect such a modification.

From the *à priori* method let us now turn to the *à posteriori*.

When did the so-called miraculous answers to prayers most frequently take place? Always in the pre-scientific ages. When are they still expected to take place among ourselves. Always in connection with those natural objects and laws that are not fully understood by us, and that

therefore may be said to be scientifically imperfect. The laws of astronomy have arrived at great scientific perfection; therefore we no longer pray that an eclipse shall not take place, nor that a comet may disappear from our sight. Yet in the fifteenth century, when very little was known of the bodies existing in space, it was thought to be a bounden duty to pray that a comet might be removed from our earth. Dr. Draper has called attention to the fact that in 1456, when Halley's comet appeared, it was considered as connected with the progress of Mohammed the Second, who had just then taken Constantinople. From his seat, invisible to it in Italy, the sovereign pontiff, Calixtus the Third, issued his ecclesiastical fulminations; but the comet in the heavens, like the sultan on the earth, pursued its course undeterred. In vain was it anathematised: in vain were prayers put up in all directions to stop it. True to its time, it punctually returns from the abysses of space uninfluenced by anything save agencies of a material kind. "A signal lesson," adds Dr. Draper,* "for the meditation of every religious man." The periodical rising and setting of the sun and moon are too familiar to us to allow the most superstitious to believe that they will be diverted from their course by human prayer. Neither would any, I think, in our own country and at the present time, expect that a high tide of the sea would suddenly be changed into a low one. But we still pray that the sea may be calm when our beloved ones are on a voyage; and the Church commands us to pray for rain and fine weather in order that our harvests may be plenteous. When the laws of the winds and weather have been as fully investigated as

* "Intellectual Development of Europe," vol. ii., pp. 253, 254.

the movements of the sun and moon and the laws of the tides, we shall as little think that the one will be altered for our sakes as the other. At our weddings and at other times we pray that a marriage shall be blessed with children; but at our funerals we do not pray that he whom we mourn shall be raised to life. Yet before the signs of death were as fully understood as they are now, it was considered no impossibility that human prayer should restore the dead to life. When the laws of birth are as fully understood as the laws of death, we shall as little think that an heir shall be sent in answer to our prayers as that those that we have lost by death shall be once more restored to us. And if further illustrations were needed, let me cite two subjects, so closely allied that we have no way for accounting for the fact that in the one instance we almost always expect that our prayers shall have some influence upon it, while in the other we rarely do, save upon the interpretation that the one class of subjects has arrived at slightly greater scientific perfection than the other. The laws of physiology are not so well understood as the laws of anatomy; the science of surgery is measurably in advance of the science of medicine. We pray, therefore, that those that are dear to us may be preserved when fevers or various other diseases assail them; but if through some accident they lose a limb, we never think that it will be restored to them through the agency of human prayer.

We see then that both *à priori* and *à posteriori* the arguments against the doctrine of the modification of natural laws through human prayer are very strong. And this is in itself a strong proof among many others of the truth of the hypothesis of evolution. It seems to me to

follow as a corollary that if the universe and all that is in it was supernaturally created by an act of arbitrary will for the benefit of man, then man may not unreasonably suppose that what has been supernaturally created for his benefit may be supernaturally modified in obedience to his wishes. If, on the contrary, these laws have been in existence, not only inconceivable ages before man was in existence, but even before his habitation, the earth, was formed, then it is presumption to expect that laws which were not made solely for man should be altered because he wishes them to be so.

Perhaps there are some among my readers who are thinking, "Well, if prayer can do no good, it is a comfort to us to pray, and at least it can do no harm." While willingly granting the immense comfort and subjective benefit to be received from prayer, let me also express my conviction that the belief in the modifiability of natural laws through human prayer has been both directly and indirectly productive of lamentable harm. Look into any history of witchcraft, whether dealing with the East or West, and you will find that the invariable proof of the witch's guilt or innocence was supposed to lie in the fact that when thrown into a river, if innocent she would certainly float, but if guilty she would assuredly sink. Even in our country the law of Trial by Battle was not formally abolished till this century; the implication, of course, being that God would protect the innocent. That law had been practically dead some time before it was openly abolished; but the formal repudiation must be regarded, I think, as an open acknowledgment of what had long been secretly felt—that the victory is with the strong, not

with the innocent; or in other words, God does not suddenly endow a naturally feeble person with unwonted strength in order to prove his innocence. And this is but another mode of saying that in cases of guilt or innocence, as in all other cases, this world is governed by natural laws, not by providential interference. Again, it would be difficult to estimate by how many centuries the science of medicine has been retarded by the assumption throughout the entire world that disease is a providential infliction, not the result of natural laws that should be studied in order to be comprehended and avoided. In our daily actions, we of this century have outgrown this conception of disease; though religious people still retain it as a principle of verbal faith. It seems to me that belief is little more than lip-worship unless it have some effect upon our actions. How little is this the case is shown by what seems to me the strangest anomaly—among many strange—of this curious age of transition of ours, that the only sect that logically and consistently carry out the belief that disease, being providentially sent as a punishment, can be cured only by prayer and repentance, are visited by legal penalties, and for the most part censured as severely by the clergy as by the laity. I allude of course to the Peculiar People.

I have hitherto confined myself to the practical consequences of a belief in evolution or special creation. But to every question there is a higher and a lower aspect. And the higher aspect in the question before us seems to me to be that of each one asking himself this question: In the present state of physical science have I any longer a *right* to believe in Design or Special Creation for the service of man? We are all of us aware that it is a duty to be honest

in word and deed; but few of us think how imperative a duty it is to be honest in our belief. Yet considering how beliefs are transmitted from generation to generation, what a mighty part they play in influencing character and actions, it seems to me that there is no subject in which scrupulous honesty should be so carefully exacted. It is indeed a difficult and oftentimes a painful matter to part with beliefs in which not only have we been educated, but which we have received from many generations of ancestors. But no one would pretend that it would not be reprehensible to speak or act dishonestly in order to save himself pain. But is it not equally reprehensible to assume that to be true which we have not troubled to investigate; still more that which every scientific discovery, as well as the experiences of our everyday life, is showing us to be contrary to truth? There seems to me no duty more sacred to man than that of reverent investigation into the facts of Nature. No good ever yet came of a man trying to make himself believe that to be a truth which in spite of himself he feels to be a falsehood.

For, it cannot be too often insisted upon, the doctrines of Special Creation and Evolution are so strongly opposed, so wholly distinct, that it is impossible that they can be each equally true. We must choose between them. Was the earth specially created for man? Are the changes on the surface of our planet due to a series of inexplicable or providentially ordered catastrophes as propounded by Cuvier? Or are they due to certain natural laws still existing, still acting out their effects; such as water, the continued dropping of which, we all know, is sufficient to produce striking results, even upon stone? Again, were

those gigantic orders of animals known popularly as *antediluvian* specially created, specially destroyed merely in caprice? Or are they, too, the result of natural laws? Still further, is the mind of man a result of *ascent* from lower and unintelligent forms of life; or a *descent* from perfect goodness, perfect wisdom?

These are questions which it behoves every one in the present day to ask himself. They are questions, be it remembered, far more pregnant, far more extended in their results and purpose than the satisfaction of scientific curiosity. They have a distinct bearing upon all the great problems of our thinking life; upon our religion, our education, above all upon our politics. Has everything been done *for* man; or has a large part been done *by* man? Has he learnt what to eat by practical experiment, and thus nourished himself? Has he learnt how to avoid being eaten by others, and thus survived to propagate his species? Or has he been supernaturally endowed with a power to obtain all that he desires through human prayer; and are all the lower animals created for his service? in which case the teachings of experience are needless.

If, as Evolution teaches, the present position of man is solely due to a subtle combination of those two great natural laws, Heredity and Adaptation; if (in the words of Darwin) "Natural Selection is daily and hourly scrutinising throughout the world the slightest variations, rejecting those that are bad, preserving and adding up all that are good; silently and insensibly working, whenever and wherever opportunity offers, at the improvement of each organic being in relation to its organic and inorganic conditions of life"; our theory of ethics must be modified

accordingly. If (what, after all, has passed into a commonplace) "practice makes perfect" and faculties good and bad perish by disuse, there must be an elimination of all that is opposed to natural law in our conceptions of the method by which this world has come into existence and continues to exist. We must believe that every effect can be traced to its own cause. We must disbelieve in caprice, in chance, even in providential interference. Let no one think it a matter of indifference whether the faith he holds be true or false. No faith that is earnestly held can escape having an influence over our conduct to ourselves and to our fellows. In this age, perhaps more than any other, it behoves us to have a reason for the faith that we hold; to endeavour, to the utmost of our ability, to "prove all things," and having done this, to hold fast to that which we have found to be true. The great practical bearing of the doctrine of Evolution is that Man has attained his present position by the working of natural laws, among which laws that singular power of learning by experience that man has in common with the higher animals must be regarded as of primary importance. We must work out our own salvation, in hope and assurance that by proper study and comprehension of natural laws it will not be difficult to attain. But let us not expect that to be done for us by others that can only be done by ourselves.

If the doctrine of Evolution be true, let us rule our conduct according to that. If the theory of Special Interposition be true, let us rule it according to that. But we must choose between them; we cannot follow both.

II.

PHILOSOPHICAL NECESSITY: A DEFENCE.*

"Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots? then may ye also do good that are accustomed to do evil."—Jeremiah xiii. 23.

IN the January number of this Review appeared an earnest and temperate article entitled, "Fervent Atheism," directed chiefly against the writings of Professor Clifford, and dwelling somewhat at length upon the immoral consequences likely to be the result of a belief in the doctrine of Necessity *versus* that of Free Will.

The object of this paper, as is obvious from its title, is to justify upon moral grounds the doctrine of Philosophical Necessity, and to rescue it from the undeserved odium that has gathered round it through, as it appears to me, a misconception of its true implication. Before proceeding with my task, let me observe that while I share the necessitarian doctrines of Professor Clifford, I repudiate all wish to identify myself with his religious, or rather non-religious, opinions. Belief in Necessity is no more a necessary correlative of Atheism than is belief in Free Will a necessary correlative of Theism. On the contrary,

* Originally printed in "The Modern Review," October, 1880.

Predestinarianism (which is a form, and as I venture to think, a very perverted form, of the doctrine of Necessity) has been supported and propagated, as every one knows, by our most eminent religious teachers—from St. Paul to St. Augustine; from St. Augustine to Calvin; and from him again to Jonathan Edwards. But while the doctrine of Free Will has never had to seek for support exclusively among *religious* teachers, it has had, I think, to seek for it principally (at all events, in our day) among our great *moral* teachers; among those noble, self-devoted men and women, who, filled with the "enthusiasm of humanity," have sacrificed their time, money, and best energies to the reclaiming and education of the little waifs and strays of our larger cities, and upon whom this doctrine of Necessity weighs like an incubus, the open propagation of it filling them with an indignation that we can scarcely regard as other than righteous, seeing how well they must be aware from long experience what a very potent factor in self-improvement is the earnest endeavour after it on the part of the subject himself.

The supporters of the doctrine of Necessity, on the other hand, are to be found, I think, in our own day, mainly among men and women of cool critical judgment, honestly anxious for the calm investigation of truth; who, after carefully balancing the evidence for and against the doctrine, have arrived at the conclusion that the evidence for is greater than the evidence against it, and propagate their views unflinchingly with little regard to any ulterior consequences. Great as is my admiration for those persons who make the pursuit of truth the one object of their lives, and who brave all personal odium for the sake of dis-

seminating what they believe to be their juster views; yet if misery and immorality can be directly traced as results of their plain speaking, I am almost inclined to side with those who hold that reticence is to be preferred to too much openness, that prudence is the better part of valour, and that on all such doubtful subjects silence is more golden than speech. But because I do not believe this to be the case with the question before us; because, on the contrary, I feel that until this doctrine of Necessity is rightly understood—until it is universally accepted and placed on a firm and logical basis, there can be no science of human nature properly so called, neither can Education be prosecuted in any truly philosophical spirit; because I believe that the entire odium by which this doctrine of Necessity is surrounded can be traced to a misconception of its true meaning, I venture to open once more this much-vexed question.

The idea of "Freedom" as attaching to the human will appears as early as the Stoics. The virtuous man was said to be *free*, and the vicious man a *slave*. The epithets "free" and "slave," as thus severally applied, occur largely in the writings of Philo Judæus, through whom they probably extended to Christian theology. The modern doctrine of Free Will as opposed to Necessity first assumed prominence and importance in connection with the doctrine of original sin and the Predestinarian views of St. Augustine. In a later age it was disputed between Arminians and Calvinists, and it is this connection with Predestinarianism, I believe, that has been the origin of much of the obloquy that has fallen on the doctrine of Philosophical Necessity. Historically considered, the theological dogma

of Predestinarianism is the offspring of a singularly repulsive form of Anthropomorphism. Consciously or unconsciously, Predestinarian believers conceive God to be an omnipotent, tyrannical Being—creator of men and arbiter of their destinies. Some he predestinates to honour, others to dishonour; some to happiness, others to misery; some to virtue, others to vice; and, "try as they may" to escape their doom, the unhappy victims whom it has been his will to create evil, can, by no possible aid from themselves or from others, ever become good.

A greater contrast to the doctrine of Philosophical Necessity cannot be imagined than this anthropomorphic conception of Predestinarianism. Necessity repudiates *in toto* the immoral doctrine that a man cannot conquer his evil tendencies if he so desire, and prove the sincerity of his desire by strenuous endeavours after improvement and self-conquest. Indeed, she pronounces this endeavour, this "try as you may," to be a very potent, if not the most potent, factor in moral perfection. But whence comes this factor? Clearly from one of two things. Either from the disposition of the person himself, in which case it becomes a factor in the organism, or from the persuasion or teaching of some friend or adviser, in which case it becomes a factor in the environment. Predestinarianism, then, consigns a man, under all circumstances, to the absolute dominion of his own evil tendencies. Philosophical Necessitarianism, on the other hand, merely asserts that certain causes under certain conditions must give rise to certain effects. Put a certain mental organism, that is to say, into a certain definite environment, and a corresponding definite character will as inevitably grow from it, as from a certain definite

seed, sown in particular soil, will be developed one kind of flower and no other. Nature throughout is one and uniform, and proceeds by rigid Law; and until we have convinced ourselves that in Ethics, as elsewhere, there reigns a Universal Causation, there can be no science properly so called of human nature. Gradually and slowly throughout the realm of knowledge the conception of Law and Necessity has taken the place of that of Chance and Spontaneity. One by one, each of the sciences as it has approached to perfection has abandoned the sovereignty of the latter influences for the former. Even Biology has yielded at last to their conquest. Psychology and Sociology will as inevitably succumb. Time was when miracle-cure, relic-cure, shrine-cure were the sole agencies invoked in relief of disease. Time was when it was peremptorily commanded that if a man had sore eyes he must invoke St. Clara; if he had an inflammation elsewhere he must turn to St. Anthony; if he had an ague he must pray for the assistance of St. Pernel.* We have learnt better now, and because the conception of Law and Necessity has taken the place of that of Chance and Spontaneity in the realm of Disease, the sciences of Physiology and Biology have been able to grow into existence. Slowly, but surely, the like conception will prevail in the realm of Ethics. Psychology and Sociology will take their proper place as recognised sciences. There is an exact parity of demonstration between the two. Given a consumptive, sickly infant, born of consumptive, sickly parents and grandparents: let his environment be one of straitened circumstances; let him, if he live past infancy (a thing in itself improbable), be put into some

* "Draper's Intellectual Development of Europe," vol. ii., p. 122.

notoriously unhealthy occupation such as that of mines or sewage, and it follows from definite laws that he will be cut off before his prime. Again, let a healthy, sturdy infant, born of a healthy pedigree, be reared to youth in competence, and then put into some eminently healthy occupation such as that of a well-to-do gardener, farmer, or gamekeeper, and, barring accidents and fevers, he will live in enjoyment of perfect health to a good old age. The same causation holds good in the realm of Ethics. Given a morally deficient child, the offspring of a vicious pedigree; let him be indoctrinated in vice from his infancy, shut out from every influence of good, encouraged in everything that is bad, and he will inevitably grow to be a scourge to society. Again, let a morally and mentally healthy child, the offspring of a virtuous pedigree, be brought up by a gentle, sympathising mother, by a just and intelligent father; let him be such a one, for instance, as Crawfurd Tait, and it follows by definite laws that his manhood and old age will be as productive of good as might be expected from such a childhood and such a youth.

"Thus far," Predestinarianism may reply, "you side with me. What is the life of Crawfurd Tait but an illustration of my doctrine that some vessels are born to honour; what of the other child you cite but that other vessels are born to dishonour?" "The cases are not in point," Necessity will answer. "You imagine your vicious character to be the product of a certain doom foreordained from time immemorial. I imagine mine to be the product of a certain seed having been placed in a certain soil. You would deny that any alteration could take place through the environment or circumstances that may surround your vicious character. I,

on the contrary, believe strongly in the modifying influences of environment that may surround mine. While I cannot shut my eyes to the pregnant facts contained in the law of Heredity; while I am forced to acknowledge with reluctance and sorrow that a bad organism cannot be changed into a good one; while I admit, that is to say, that no organism can be radically *altered*, I yet not only hope, but feel perfectly sure that, with very few exceptions, every organism may be materially *modified*. A stinging-nettle will never be turned into a rose; but the fragrance and size of the rose depend much upon the soil it is in and the amount of water and sunshine it receives. A good seed put into good soil will certainly bring forth good fruit; a bad seed put into bad soil will with equal certainty bring forth bad fruit. "But how about bad seed put into good soil, and good seed put into bad soil?"

The doctrine of Philosophical Necessity, then, is nothing more than the recognition of the invariable law of Cause and Effect; of the great truth that in Ethics as elsewhere there is no chance or spontaneity; but that character is the inevitable product of a certain combination of organism with environment. Mr. Herbert Spencer has defined Life to be *the continuous adjustment of internal relations to external relations;** and, taking it on the whole, this, of many definitions, is, I think, the best that has been given. In the majority of cases the action and reaction between the organism and its environment balance each other. But here and there exceptions to the rule will be found. In cases of strong individuality the power of the organism is immensely in excess of the power of the environment, as will at once

* "Principles of Biology," vol. i., p. 80.

be seen by recalling to memory such of our great geniuses as have been "self-made men," and who have had to struggle to eminence through the most adverse circumstances. Again, there are other cases where the individuality is so slight that the power of the environment is greatly in excess of the organism, and the character will be entirely at the mercy of the circumstances by which it is surrounded. But still, in the majority of cases, for all practical purposes, the assertion that "Life is the continuous adjustment of internal relations to external relations," will be found to be correct; and as an adumbration of this truth Character may be defined as "Heredity *plus* environments."

"But," the supporter of the doctrine of Free Will may inquire, "if the character of my child is solely the product of Heredity and environments, if he have no power to amend his failings, why should I punish him?" "According to your own doctrine," Necessity might reply, "you ought not to punish him, since you do not believe in the universal law of Cause and Effect. Neglect your child as you may, some happy chance will arrive, some miraculous answer to your prayer take place, and the little reprobate become a child of grace. I, on the contrary, who am a believer in rigid Law, who hold that nothing proceeds uncaused, punish my child, because I think punishment is a potent factor in the environment that is slowly modifying his character." "But has my child no power over himself?" Free Will may inquire; "can he not love virtue for its own sake, and look upon the avoidance of vice as a more sacred thing than the avoidance of pain?" "Doubtless he can, *subject to two conditions*. Either his own moral per-

ceptions must be sufficiently exalted for him to be able to recognise the beauty of holiness—which exalted perception is a factor in the organism; or he must be under the charge of those who know how to train him judiciously while he is yet young and his character pliant, so that from early habit and association virtue will gradually grow pleasurable to him and vice distasteful—which judicious training is a factor in his environment." There are many cases—perhaps the majority—where encouragement, trust, and the force of good example will be found to be greater deterrents from vice than any amount of punishment; and it was owing to this discovery that Dr. Arnold was so singularly successful in the training of youth. Until parents and teachers recognise the fact that different characters require different treatment, as surely as different seeds require different soil—which is but another mode of recognising that certain effects can only proceed from certain causes—there can be no scientific process of education. Until our eminent novelists recognise the fact that certain conduct can only arise from certain character, we may have exciting plots or humorous *dénouements*, but no accurate delineation of human nature as it in reality is. Perhaps I need scarcely excuse myself on the score of a digression, if, instead of proceeding with this essay in the somewhat dry form of philosophical discussion, I give expression to my views through the medium of a comparison between two novelists of equal eminence, equal repute, but one of whom I believe to be a radically unscientific writer, the other eminently scientific.

There is a wide-spread notion among many critics that the one thing needful for the creation of an able novel is that its author be an accurate observer of human idiosyn-

crasies. That this is a most necessary ingredient in the writer of fiction no one can deny; but if he would aspire to take his place amongst our greatest masters, it is not enough. It appears to me that the difference between the careful observer of human idiosyncrasies and one who has mastered the principles of Psychology, is the difference between a well-trained nurse and the skilful physician. The one can deal with special cases which come under her notice; the other, in addition to this, knows efficiently the general laws of health and disease. His medical studies have taught him that where certain causes exist certain effects will follow; and where certain effects have been observed the causes must be carefully investigated. There are many medical cases where the careful, well-trained nurse can supply the place of the wisest physician; there are others where, for lack of sufficient technical knowledge, she does more harm than good. What applies to the investigator of the laws of the body, equally applies to the writer who attempts to describe the workings of the human mind. The good novelist may be likened to the well-trained nurse; the exceptionally good novelist to the skilled physician. It is the difference, for instance, between Charles Dickens and George Eliot. Take Charles Dickens, where he is describing the idiosyncrasies of his fellow-creatures; their tricks of manner, of voice, of gesture; and he is not to be surpassed. But take him where he is attempting to describe the subtler operations of the human mind; where mere superficial observation of outward peculiarities is insufficient, and he treads at once with uncertain step. Nay, I go even farther than this, and pronounce one or two of his creations to be absolute impossibilities I am not now

alluding to the oft-repeated charge of the impossible perfection with which he so frequently endows his heroes and heroines. That virtue is rare is unfortunately true; but only the pessimist believes it impossible. I do not quarrel with Dickens because he occasionally draws us the picture of a perfect rose, but because, without any adequate cause, he suddenly transforms the most meagre chaff into finest grain. I do not hesitate to say, for instance, that the portraiture of Mr. Dombey is an impossibility. ' Given a character that is naturally cold, unsympathetic, and egoistic; let its environment lie in soil specially adapted for the growth of those qualities ; let every one with whom it comes in contact bend down and flatter, and let the subject himself, sometimes unconsciously, but sometimes also consciously and wilfully, do all he can to thwart his better, and encourage his worse nature ; let this state of affairs go on for sixty years, till egoism has grown into arrogance, and selfishness into positive cruelty, and I believe it to be an utter impossibility that in a moment of time the work of sixty years will be undone, and the cold, arrogant Mr. Dombey be transformed into the docile, grateful being he is represented to be at the close of the book. Let us glance for a moment at the leading incidents of his life.

When the book opens he is forty-eight years of age, handsome in appearance, stern and pompous in manner, with but one idea in his life—Dombey and Son. The only human affection of which he seems capable is love for this son, born so late in his married life. His daughter, during her earlier years, excites no other feeling in him than that of cold indifference. But as the years pass, and little Paul

grows older, this indifference increases into jealous dislike. Paul loves her better than his father, and in that last bitter hour of his death it is his sister to whom he clings, not his father. Still, had Dickens determined to transform Mr. Dombey's character into one of gentleness and love, the period of Paul's death would surely have been the most probable. Death is a mighty softener and humbler of mankind. Even the most haughty will crave for sympathy and pity when under the shadow of its icy touch; and could Mr. Dombey be stirred with love to his daughter at all, now would surely be the time, when Death, the great reconciler, was in the house, and he had done nothing worse to her than neglect her; not ten years afterwards, when disgrace and downfall—two calamities that will make many a victim much less proud than Mr. Dombey shrink from sympathy and condolence—were smiting him, and when he had upon his conscience ten additional years of neglect to his daughter, occasionally amounting to unkindness and positive cruelty, these additional years forming a very potent factor in the growth of his dislike. For it must not be forgotten, we can never indulge in persistent and undeserved unkindness to any one without getting at last to dislike our victim. If we will carefully analyse either our own character or the characters of others, we shall see that there is a constant tendency in every one to dislike those they have injured, and love those they have benefited. Startling as it may seem at first sight, it is nevertheless true—it is always easier for us to forgive those who have injured us than those we have injured. I have often tried to analyse the reason of this, and I think it lies in the fact that even in the most callous person there is a

certain poor shred of conscience that will not allow him to injure the innocent without some stings of remorse. He therefore persuades himself, as an anodyne to his self-reproach, that his victim is not innocent, but wholly deserving of his behaviour. And if we once try to do this, if we wilfully shut our eyes to the many merits of a person and persistently brood over his few demerits—whether fancied or real—it is wonderful how vile and unworthy the noblest character may appear through the distorted medium of our own perverted fancy. Florence's devotion to his son was imagined by Mr. Dombey to be wilful stealing of his heart from his father; her love for his wife, open rebellion against his authority as a husband. All her gentle and lovable qualities are perverted into so many crimes against himself, until at last even the tender sympathy she proffers him when his wife deserts him has only the effect of enraging him, and in a moment of frenzy he strikes her a blow that nearly fells her to the ground. She flies his house; she has no father—none. Even her love, patient and long-suffering as it has been, is exhausted. She will not hate him; she has no feelings of revenge; she only casts him out from her poor, bruised affections. She never speaks of him; as far as possible she never thinks of him; and by slow degrees he becomes to her as though he had never been: while he goes on in proud sullenness, betraying no anxiety about her, neither knowing nor caring where she is until the final crash comes. The house which has the keeping of his reputation fails; Dombey and Son are ruined and disgraced. Then Florence, filled with compassion, throws herself at his feet, blaming herself, not him—begging his forgiveness for having left him.

Now, there is nothing improbable in this self-devotion—in the injured making the first efforts towards reconciliation with the injurer. Very loving sympathetic natures, until they have learnt by hard experience the positive necessity of self-control, are too often apt to charge themselves with sins they never committed, rather bearing all the blame themselves than utter the faintest reproach against those who have injured them. There was nothing, I say, improbable in Florence making the first effort at reconciliation; but there is the greatest improbability in her father accepting it. He who had repelled her sympathy when they were fellow-mourners for little Paul; he who had struck her when she longed to comfort him for his wife's desertion—was it likely that he would do anything else than spurn her when she intruded upon his privacy in his sore humiliation? With his perverted fancy he would instantly have jumped to the conclusion that she only came to gloat over his disgrace; or if, in spite of all, she had forced him to listen to her passionate, exaggerated expressions of self-accusation, he would have accepted her at her own value, claiming it as an additional proof that he had been right in his evil judgment of her, that he was the aggrieved party and she the aggressor. It is only the generous who can comprehend extreme generosity; and had Mr. Dombey been capable of appreciating his daughter's magnanimity, most assuredly he would have been incapable of those long years of neglect, dislike, and cruelty. Whenever characters such as Mr. Dombey's are capable of turning in a moment of time from the height of haughtiness and arrogance to the extreme of gentleness

and love, then, indeed, may we expect figs to come from thistles and grapes from thorns.

It is when depicting the subtler operations of the human mind that George Eliot, as it appears to me, surpasses not only Charles Dickens, but almost all the great writers of her time. She alone, of all our novelists, has, through her wide acquaintance with philosophy and psychology, been able to perceive that in the human mind, as elsewhere, certain seed can only be followed by certain fruit through the irrevocable law of cause and effect. In her earliest as in her latest works this principle is scrupulously followed; and it is for this reason that I am unable to agree with the opinion pronounced by so many critics, that George Eliot, through the learning and philosophy she had acquired of late years, was beginning to lose the freshness of her earlier style. Such critics forget that, before she brought out her first novel, this distinguished woman was the accomplished translator of Strauss and Feuerbach. In all her novels alike she so deals with the characters she creates that they appear to be gradually unfolded as the development of a flower from its minutest seed; and she never yields to the temptation, for the sake of a happy conclusion to her story, of twisting her characters into forms it would have been impossible for them in nature to assume. It is for this reason, notwithstanding the almost unparalleled circulation of her novels, that I believe George Eliot is a writer whose works are almost thrown away on the ordinary reader of the circulating library type. She has, no doubt, the all-essential art of making her plot interesting; and it is to this art she owes her commercial success. But she has much more than this

art. Her creations are psychological studies. She will be admired by the many, appreciated by the few. She is eminently a writer to be comprehended by the matured reader more than by the young; by the masculine mind more than by the feminine. Take the character of Hetty Sorrel, for instance. Who amongst us that was young when "Adam Bede" was published was not half angry with the author for making Hetty so cold and obstinately hard almost to the end? Sweet little Hetty! with her exquisite form, her childish beauty, her ignorant little nature! How unlikely that she would not melt at the sight of all the suffering she had so unwittingly caused. Surely, had she died of a broken heart, it would have been much more natural—certainly much more touching! It is only when we have found out by hard experience that we must not expect to find deeds of love or speeches of affection from persons whose natures are utterly devoid of all affection, that we begin to perceive how finely and accurately drawn is the character of Hetty Sorrel. For, from our first introduction to her until our final farewell, the author never lets us lose sight of the fact that she is incapable of any exalted aims; though at the beginning of our acquaintance with her she is depicted as free from any absolute vice, we are never allowed to forget that she is devoid of any virtue. She has no affection, no conscience, no gratitude. Her young heart is stirred by none of the innocent day-dreams of sweet girlhood. She thinks of no loving husband whom she will worship and cherish—no little children for whom she will slave and deny herself. Her whole thoughts are occupied with the fine house she will have, the dresses she will wear, the jewels

with which she will decorate herself, and, above all, with the less fortunate who will envy her.

"Does any sweet or sad memory mingle with this dream of the future —any loving thought of her second parents—of the children she had helped to tend—of any youthful companion, any pet animal, any relic of her own childhood even? Not one. There are some plants that have hardly any roots; you may tear them from their native nook of rock or wall, and just lay them over your ornamental flower-pot, and they blossom none the worse. Hetty could have cast all her past life behind her, and never cared to be reminded of it again. I think she had no feeling at all towards the old house, and did not like the Jacob's Ladder and the long row of hollyhocks in the garden better than other flowers—perhaps not so well. It was wonderful how little she seemed to care about waiting on her uncle, who had been a good father to her; she hardly ever remembered to reach him his pipe at the right time without being told, unless a visitor happened to be there, who would have a better opportunity of seeing her as she walked across the hearth. Hetty did not understand how any one could be very fond of middle-aged people. And as for those tiresome children, Marty and Tommy and Totty, they had been the very nuisance of her life. . . . . Hetty would have been glad to hear that she should never see a child again; they were worse than the nasty little lambs that the shepherd was always bringing in to be taken special care of in lambing time; for the lambs *were* got rid of, sooner or later. As for the young chickens and turkeys, Hetty would have hated the very word 'hatching,' if her aunt had not bribed her to attend to the young poultry by promising her the proceeds of one out of every brood. The round, downy chicks peeping out from under their mother's wing never touched Hetty with any pleasure; that was not the sort of prettiness she cared about, but she did care about the prettiness of the new things she would buy for herself at Treddleston Fair with the money they fetched."—*Adam Bede.*

Such is the portraiture of Hetty Sorrel at the commencement of the tale; and the character is developed rigidly, truthfully to the end—I was well-nigh saying sternly, save that the author seems to pause at times as if filled with an infinite compassion for her own creation. This little

Hetty—this petted, pampered little being, with whom every one—man and woman alike—is more than half in love, why should it be that her future must be so unlike her past? This distracting, kitten-like maiden, with not much more conscience and intelligence than a dog, and far less affection—why should it be that her only mental characteristic of humanity is her infinite capacity for human suffering? But in spite of her compassion, the author proceeds with her task unfalteringly. There has been no affection or gratitude in Hetty in the days of her prosperity; there will be no compunction or self-forgetful distress in the days of her adversity. How can that come out which has never been in? And there has never been affection or love in Hetty save for herself. When she flies from Adam and her uncle and aunt to seek a refuge from her shame with Arthur, there is not even the faintest movement within her of any compunction for the strong, faithful man whom she has so terribly wronged, for her tender relatives upon whom she is bringing such calamity and shame. Her whole compassion is for herself. Even Arthur she flies to as a last resort. She does not love him now; she hates him—for is it not he who has brought upon her all this misery? She does, indeed, exhibit some little feeling—half remorse, half superstitious horror—after the murder of her child. This, too, is portrayed with rigid regard to probability. At seventeen or eighteen a woman cannot be matured in perfect wickedness. The poisonous tree is little more than a sapling. But had Hetty lived twenty or thirty years longer instead of dying ere her sentence was completed, she would, despite her beauty and despite her fascination, have been among the hardened criminals

of her day. How can we expect fruit where there has been no seed? And in Hetty Sorrel's nature there has never been the faintest seed of duty or affection.

Now let us turn to Rosamond Vincy, in "Middlemarch," a character which, notwithstanding the striking divergence in their outward circumstances, I cannot but think greatly resembles that of Hetty Sorrel, although, in all probability, the self-satisfied Miss Vincy would be very loth to admit any similarity. Nevertheless, if we look into the secret workings of their two small souls, we shall find that there is very little to choose between them. They are alike in their selfishness, their absence of affection, their lack of any high moral ideal. Rosamond's love for Lydgate is very much in the same ratio as Hetty's for Arthur—that is to say, *with the exception of herself*, she loves him better than anything else; but this exception is enormous, and the consciousness that Lydgate was "a baronet's cousin, and almost in the county set," was as necessary an ingredient in her love for him as was the hope of jewels and dresses in Hetty's for Arthur. Nay, somehow little Hetty Sorrel presents to me a more attractive figure than Miss Vincy. Perhaps it is that vanity and frivolity are less distasteful in an ignorant little village maid of seventeen than in a self-satisfied young lady of the pattern boarding-school type, in the full maturity of twenty-two. Somehow the little, round, childish being, strutting in pigeon-like stateliness in her poor room, attired in comical odds and ends, presents to me a more picturesque figure than the self-possessed damsel with the long neck and correct deportment, faultlessly attired in her favourite blue. No fear is there of Miss Vincy yielding

to seduction, as little as to a *mésalliance;* for is she not the highly decorous and pattern pupil at Mrs. Lemon's finishing school? And do not such young ladies invariably fail to see any temptation in vices that are unprofitable? External rewards and punishments depend more upon environment than upon organism. Selfishness and vanity in Hetty Sorrel, a poor little rustic of seventeen, lead to seduction, child-murder, and retribution. The same qualities in Rosamond Vincy, a matured young lady of twenty-two, and the daughter of a well-to-do manufacturer, lead to a carriage and pair, and a rich old husband for her second marriage. Providence, in the shape of worldly prosperity, does not always adapt itself to our moral deserts. We are children of a large family; and our busy mother Nature seems to have too much to do to mete out rigidly a just proportion of reward or punishment. But though the ultimate destiny of a poisonous plant is uncertain—though here it may be thrown upon a dunghill, and there carefully treasured as a valuable aid in medicine—nothing will prevent a poisonous seed growing to a poisonous plant. Rosamond Vincy's character is as accurately traced to the end as Hetty Sorrel's. She had no love in her girlhood for her brothers and sisters; no gratitude and affection for her tender parents. What was wanting in her girlhood was equally wanting in her wifehood. As soon as her husband falls into poverty she begins to dislike him. She would willingly leave him to bear his sorrows by himself, and return to her parents, were it not that she is afraid of some slur being cast upon herself for doing so. She had married him because he was in a station higher

than herself, and a baronet's cousin; and when he falls into undeserved disgrace, it is herself alone that she compassionates. She is touched with no memory of his tender care and love for her; she is filled with no ardent longings generously to defend him now he is under the ban of disgrace. She only thinks it very hard that the match, of which she had been so proud, should have so wofully disappointed her expectations. And when in the end he dies, still in his prime, after having weakly yielded all his nobler aims to her shallow judgment, she quickly comforts herself for his loss by taking, as his successor, a far more wealthy husband.

But finely drawn as are the characters of Hetty Sorrel and Rosamond Vincy, they do not equal, in my opinion, the really marvellous creation of Tito Melemma in "Romola," which is unique, not only in George Eliot's own works, but almost in the entire fiction of our country. His character, also, has this advantage over that of Hetty or Rosamond, that it is of a more usual type; and, consequently, the lesson to be learnt from it is of wider and more general application. Fortunately for the world at large, characters so utterly devoid of all good feeling as Hetty's and Rosamond's are not of frequent occurrence. The majority of people are not black nor white, but various shades of grey; and although, it must be admitted, Tito's character is a somewhat dark shade of grey, it is by nature far removed from absolute black. When we are first introduced to him, he is by no means without redeeming qualities. He is very sweet-tempered; he cannot bear to be the witness of pain or misery in his fellow-creatures; and he will even undergo voluntarily a little trouble and

inconvenience for the sake of alleviating the sufferings of those whom he compassionates. Even when he had sunk to his lowest, he was still capable of feeling true affection for Tessa and her children. At the beginning of the book he is gentle and kind to all alike; "but because he tried to slip away from everything that was unpleasant, and cared for nothing else so much as his own safety, he came at last to commit some of the basest deeds—such as make men infamous. He denied his father, and left him to misery; he betrayed every trust that was reposed in him, that he might keep himself safe and get rich and prosperous."

The all-important lesson set forth in this work is the terrible reproductive power of wrong-doing, the inevitable propagation of one sin from another, until at last the good fruit is entirely overgrown and thrust out by the rapid inroads of pernicious weeds. Our deeds are such mighty begetters and so fatally prolific. Every time we yield to temptation makes us easier preys to fresh temptation. Every time we refuse to obey the impulses of our better nature makes it more difficult for us in future to obey them. Habit is second nature, and, whether it be good or bad, the practice we dislike at the beginning because it is difficult, becomes pleasant to us in the end because it is facile. In every act, in every phase of our lives, the beginning is half of the whole. "Our lives make a moral tradition for our individual selves, as the life of mankind at large makes a moral tradition for the race; and to have once acted greatly seems a reason why we should always be noble;" and when we have once acted wickedly there is a fatal tendency to repeat the wickedness. In all her works alike George Eliot impresses the importance of this doctrine upon us: "Our

deeds determine us as much as we determine our deeds; and until we know what has been or will be the peculiar combination of outward with inward facts, which constitutes a man's critical actions, it will be better not to think ourselves wise about his character. There is a terrible coercion in our deeds which may first turn the honest man into a deceiver, and then reconcile him to the change; for this reason—that the second wrong presents itself to him as the only practicable right." ("Adam Bede.") And again, "Our deeds are like children that are born to us; they live and act apart from our own will. Nay, children may be strangled, but deeds never: they have an indestructible life both in and out of our consciousness." ("Romola.")

And if it be said: Such a doctrine is immoral and dangerous; let a person once believe it is impossible or even only difficult to free himself from the sin that is enthralling him, and he will despair instead of trying to improve; the answer is, the doctrine is not immoral if it be true. On the contrary, the real immorality lies in our concealing a doctrine so important. We do not think it wicked to warn the incipient drunkard that, if he give way to drunkenness for years, he will find it more difficult to conquer the evil habit in the end than he would in the beginning. But even drunkenness, horrible as it is, is not so pernicious as more insidious sins, because it never ceases to appear to the subject himself other than horrible. Its evil effects are so obvious—the bloated face, the shattered frame, the dissipated income—that though the drunkard may never cease to love his wine and spirit, he seldom learns to love the sin of drunkenness itself. But with the more insidious sins of vanity, selfishness, and the negation of all virtue, the

danger lies in the fact of the slow, gradual loss of sensibility in the subject, so that deeds of baseness which he performs in the beginning with the greatest reluctance, he commits at last, through force of repetition, with the greatest ease. Sin has reached its most fatal depths when it is no longer regarded as sin. "The Hazaels of our world, who are pushed on quickly against their preconceived confidence in themselves to do dog-like actions by the sudden suggestions of a wicked ambition, are much fewer than those who are led on through the years by the gradual demands of a selfishness which has spread its fibres far and wide through the intricate vanities and sordid cares of an every-day existence." ("Felix Holt.") Tell this gentle, not unconscientious, though somewhat selfish, unloving girl of eighteen, for instance, that if she persistently indulge in her selfishness and hardness she will, by the time she is five-and-thirty, not only have alienated through her coldness and want of sympathy nearly every friend she formerly possessed, but will, by such indulgence, be the means of increasing upon herself the very sins that are the cause of the alienation; prophesy to her that her whole moral tone will be so gradually lowered that she will come to think it not in the least undutiful to neglect her parents, to disobey her husband, sometimes positively to ill-treat her little child for no other reason than that she is devoid of all child-love —as she is, alas! devoid of all love save for herself; tell her all this, prophesy to her, now she is eighteen, what she will be at five-and-thirty, and she will exclaim with not unrighteous indignation, "Is thy servant a dog that she should do this thing?" Yet when the five-and-thirty years shall have been attained, when all these prophecies are ful-

filled, she will no longer have sufficient moral perception left to render her aghast at what she has become. Unchecked egoism through nearly twenty years will have done its work too well. It will have penetrated every fibre of her moral constitution till all healthy perception has been deadened. She will not perceive that she is to blame. She will only wonder, with plaintive self-pity, why people should so studiously avoid her; why persons who are on all sides credited with exceptional amiability and charm of manner, should appear to her so wofully unamiable and deficient in charm. She will not know that the fault lies in herself. She will be ignorant that by her wholesale censure and discontent, she is affording the more thoughtful observer a striking illustration of the doctrine of automorphism; for she is creating every person in the likeness of herself, and naturally dislikes the result. Of all this she will be unconscious. She will only be aware of a lurking, scarcely acknowledged sensation that notwithstanding perfect health and ample competence, she is far removed from being happy, and will leap to the conclusion that others are the aggressors, not herself. It is so natural and easy for us to feel ourselves the aggrieved party when we only take into account the duties others owe to us, and are totally oblivious of the claims those others in their turn have upon us.

Yet if the naturally selfish person had only been acquainted, while yet in his youth, with the irrevocable law of Cause and Effect in human nature as elsewhere, he might have been able to prevent his selfishness from increasing to such dimensions. Although we must never expect to find the full perfection of good in persons as

wholly devoid of right tendencies as Hetty or Rosamond, we must yet remember that evil tendencies, as other things, perish by lack of use; and that in characters made up of a mixture of good and evil, such as Tito Melemma's, the good may be so increased by what it feeds on, the evil so dwarfed by lack of food, that the character will be so materially modified as to appear to the general observer radically altered. Every blacksmith and every ballet-girl testify to the fact that by practice the muscles of the arms and legs may be increased to more than their normal size. Every plodding scholar, who is not otherwise unusually gifted, is a positive proof of what the brain can be trained to do by industry and patience. So every character, unless it be born with some radical defect in it, has the power of modifying itself into less good or less bad than it is by nature. Faults which are easy to conquer at eighteen are immensely more difficult to conquer at five-and-thirty; at sixty, practically impossible. As well might we believe that a voice that is naturally harsh and croaking, and about which there has been no attempt at development or training, will suddenly, at the age of sixty years, transform itself into that of an Adelina Patti; as well might we believe that a naturally feeble intellect, which has never attempted to exercise itself upon anything more difficult of comprehension than a fifth-rate novel, will at the age of sixty years suddenly become capable of the conceptions of a Newton; as believe that a man possessing the arrogance and sternness of Mr. Dombey will suddenly become endowed at the age of sixty years with the extreme gentleness and tenderness which

Dickens represents his hero to possess at the close of the book.

The great lesson, then, to be learnt from George Eliot is, in the first place, the recognition that in human nature, as elsewhere, certain fruit can only be the product of certain seed; and in the second that Vice and Virtue are increased by performance. Like so many other things in nature, they exhibit a tendency to grow by what they feed on. She does not therefore—as so many moralists—frighten away her readers from sin by the ignoble fear of punishment either in this world or the next, but by the nobler dread of moral self-deterioration.

"But," may argue the supporter of Free Will, "is not this just what I contend for? Is not your whole comparison between the scientific and the unscientific novelist a proof that every individual can modify his character if he but try while there is yet time? And does it not prove my theory that every person is endowed with that mysterious, uncaused power which I name Free Will, because it enables its possessor to reject the evil or accept the good, according to his own volition?" To which criticism I can but repeat what was said in the earlier portion of this paper: doubtless he can modify himself *subject to the two conditions of his own organism and his own environment.* He must either loathe sin through his own innate love of purity; or he must gradually learn to loathe it because of his growing acquaintance with its inevitable consequences. There are few greater preventives to vice than an adequate knowledge in early youth of its logical consequents.

We are most of us familiar with the fable of the two

knights, who quarrelled about the self-same shield because each of them saw one side of it alone. It appears to me, so far as the morality of the question goes, that the disputants of the Free Will and Necessity controversy are somewhat in the same position. It is not a little singular how even the ablest supporters of the doctrine of Free Will, when arguing in favour of it, concede by implication all that Necessity demands. Even Dr. Carpenter, as it appears to me, falls into the trap.

In the Preface to the fourth edition of his "Mental Physiology," in commenting upon the baneful and immoral consequences likely to be the result of a belief in the doctrine of Necessity, he says :—

"I can imagine nothing more paralysing to every virtuous effort, more withering to every noble aspiration, than that our children should be brought up in the belief that their characters are entirely formed *for* them by 'heredity' and 'environments;' that they *must* do whatever their respective characters impel them to do; that they have no other power of resisting temptations to evil than such as may spontaneously arise from the knowledge they have acquired of what they ought or ought not to do," &c.

What does all this mean, but that *discouragement* of attempts at self-improvement is a very potent factor for evil in the "environment" of a child, as *encouragement* is an equally potent factor for good?

Again, in the first chapter of the same work he says:—

"A being entirely governed by the lower passions and instincts, whose higher moral sense has been repressed from its earliest dawn by the degrading influence of the conditions in which he is placed, who has never learnt to exercise any kind of self-restraint, who has never heard of a God, of Immortality, or of the worth of his Soul, . . . can surely be no more morally responsible for his actions than the lunatic."

What is all this but conceding to the Necessitarian that a bad organism put into a bad environment cannot help being bad? Still further, when, with evident reference to his sister, he speaks "of the benevolent individuals who know how to find out the holy spot in every child's heart," does he not really imply that the noble sister, of whom he is so justly proud, was a most potent factor for good in the "environment" of every child who was fortunate enough to come under her benign influence?

But while the difference between the real *moral aims* of the supporters of Free Will and Necessity is little more than verbal, the retention of the term *Free* Will is altogether vicious. It is a metaphysical entity which cannot be too soon abandoned. If by "Free" is meant that which is *uncaused* or *subject to no laws* (and I imagine it must have this meaning or none), then a belief in Free Will is as much a remnant of ignorance as is belief in incantations or shrine-cures. Early ideas concerning thought and feeling ignored everything like Cause, as much as still earlier ideas concerning health and disease ignored everything like Cause. Until it was discovered that health and sickness did not arise spontaneously, but could invariably be traced to some antecedent cause; until it was observed they did not disappear miraculously in answer to prayers or incantations, but always as the result of some particular mode of treatment, there could be no science of medicine, properly so called. There is a like analogy in the realm of Ethics. Until the fact is recognised that there is a scientific basis for Morals, there can be no science of Education in the full sense of the word. Until the conceptions of chance and spontaneity are

eliminated from Psychology equally with Biology or Astronomy, we can have no adequate acquaintance with the laws of human nature. I fully agree with Professor Clifford that "moral reprobation and responsibility cannot exist unless we assume the efficacy of certain special means of influencing character."* Once admit that there is in each of us a metaphysical entity, independent of cause, and subject to no conditions, named Free Will, and it follows that though the "Will" may be "free," we ourselves are the helpless slaves of that Will. If it be subject to no conditions; if, that is to say, indulgence in past vices acts as no deteriorating influence from future virtues; if long indulgence in indolence does not make it difficult to be industrious, or long indulgence in frivolous pursuits does not predispose us to dislike sensible ones; if, in a word, this mighty mysterious uncaused entity, Free Will, has the power to make us what we will at any moment of our lives, without any reference to our past habits, to our restraint or absence of restraint, to whether we are old and hardened or young and pliant; then, indeed, we have no right to punish for crime or reward for virtue. What effect can rewards or punishments have upon this uncaused entity, superior to all conditions?

I do not believe that there is a single scientific supporter of the doctrine of Philosophical Necessity who would deny that we have volitions. All he would assert is that those volitions are the product of heredity, strongly modified by environment; in a word, that our volitions are not independent of conditions. They are subject to definite laws; they live and grow and beget volitions like unto themselves.

* Lectures and Essays, vol. ii., p. 120.

Thus each man's early life has a most potent influence upon his later life.

> " Our deeds still travel with us from afar,
> And what we have been makes us what we are."

Surely there is nothing in this doctrine that need excite the moral indignation of those noble souls who are devoted to the service of their fellows. Surely the open recognition of it must tend to good and not to evil. It cannot be called irreligious, since even in its perverted form it has been preached by eminent religionists. It cannot be called immoral, since the full acceptance of it leads to the highest morality. For it should make such as are conscious of being more free from vice than their fellows humble and grateful instead of puffed up; since it teaches them how much they owe to the judicious training of those about them, how much more, perhaps, to the inherited virtues of their ancestors. It should make them lenient and tender to such as are ignoble and vicious—even though for their own sakes they will not refrain from punishing them—knowing full well their disadvantages both of heredity and environment. And, lastly, it should make them regard it as a positive duty to succour and assist their weakly brethren, who without their aid might perish on the thorny road towards perfection. It is a grave, almost an awful responsibility, from which, nevertheless, we may not turn away our eyes, that each one of us now living can be a potent factor for good or evil in the environment of those with whom we have to do. Still greater responsibility is it to be made aware of the fact that through the *necessary* laws of heredity we must transmit with increased vigour

our virtues and vices equally with our health and disease to our unborn offspring. Surely the humane man can have no greater deterrent from vice than the knowledge that it largely depends upon himself, upon his own restraint or absence of restraint, whether his posterity be happy or miserable.

If this be so—if each one of us can be a potent factor for good or evil in the environment of his fellows; if mental, moral, and physical qualities are inheritable by posterity—a doctrine every psychologist and physiologist will attest—surely we should not keep our children in ignorance of knowledge of such paramount importance. It should be taught them by their parents—it should be preached to them from the pulpit. When they arrive at a marriageable age they should be told to pause before they unthinkingly ally themselves with a family that has been for generations physically, mentally, and morally deteriorating. Lastly, we should teach them that by early application and restraint they may be largely creators of their own future; not from the spontaneous interference of an uncaused entity—Free Will—but from the *necessary* law of cause and effect. Throughout the realm of Nature this law runs: Like begets Like. The reward of the practice of virtue is increased easiness in virtue till gradually vice becomes impossible. The penalty of indolence or baseness is increased indolence and baseness till virtue becomes impossible. To conclude with a passage from Spinoza:—

"The necessity of things which I contend for abrogates neither divine nor human laws; the moral precepts, whether they have or have not the shape of commandments from God, are still divine and salutary; and the good that flows from virtue and godly love, whether it be derived

from God as a ruler and law-giver, or proceed from the constitution, that is, the necessity of the Divine nature, is not on this account less desirable. On the other hand, the evils that arise from wickedness are not the less to be dreaded and deplored because they necessarily follow the actions done." *

* Spinoza: His Life, Correspondence, and Ethics. By R. Willis, M.D., p. 355.

III.

NATURAL GROWTH IN ETHICS.

"He most lives
Who thinks most, feels the noblest, acts the best."
—P. J. BAILEY.

IN the preceding essay I have devoted some space to the consideration of Philosophical Necessity, and endeavoured to show in what lay its superiority, both logical and moral, over Free Will. Such readers as dissented from that essay will equally dissent from this, since it is based upon it, or rather stands to it in the relation of a part to its whole. Obviously, if man's entire nature—physical, mental, and moral—proceeds not by rigid law, one portion alone, the moral, cannot so proceed. And my present purpose is to show that morality is intrinsic, not extrinsic; that it originates in no supernatural revelation of God's making, nor penal codes of man's (though these may be important aids to it), but proceeds, like everything else in nature, from inherent uniformity; there being no indissoluble union between religion and morality, since though frequently seen together, they have been still more often seen apart. The fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, for instance, were periods when religious feeling was in a state of exaltation, and

morality in one of depression, while the lives of most of the philosophers of our own day present a condition exactly the reverse.

By Religion I understand that which pertains to man's duties and relations towards God; by Morality that which deals with his relations and duties towards his fellows. But before proceeding further there is another term necessary to be defined, though much more difficult of concise definition, viz., Superstition; and, if I appear to devote undue length to a discussion of the nature of Superstition, this difficulty must be my apology.

The witty distinction drawn between orthodoxy and heterodoxy—"Orthodoxy is my doxy, heterodoxy is your doxy"—is not without parallel, I think, in the distinction drawn by most religious people between their own religion and that of others, the latter being, in their opinion, superstition. Nay, even philosophers, like Hobbes, seem to think this distinction a sufficient one. In his "Leviathan" he thus defines the two: "Fear of power invisible, feigned by the mind, or imagined from tales publicly allowed, Religion; not allowed, Superstition." * Such is not the way the word will be employed here. The superstitious spirit discloses itself equally, I think, in religion, morality, history, even in medicine.

The beginnings of things are very wonderful. How came the theory even to be broached that if thirteen sit down to dinner one will shortly die; that it is unlucky to commence any enterprise on a Friday; that if a cow die suddenly, its death may be traced to the malignity of some old woman living miles away? "Coincidences are mistaken for causes"

* Hobbes' Collected Works, edited by Sir W. Molesworth, vol. iii., p. 45.

is sometimes said in explanation. "Judiciously ignore every case that does not tally with a beloved belief, and carefully register each that does; and there will be no theory, however wild, that may not assume a *quasi* probability." What is sufficient to support is not sufficient to create. It is scarcely conceivable that one death amongst thirteen diners, for instance, should have occurred so frequently as to impress men (were their minds not already in a state of anticipation) with the relation of cause and effect.

I have sometimes thought that most of the aberrations of human nature, that seem to baffle all interpretation from their extraordinary baselessness, may be traced to the tendency that there is in the undisciplined mind to endorse any error rather than acknowledge itself to be in the wrong. Though it be a matter of supreme indifference—whether a person did or did not call, or was dressed in black or in brown—the thing has been asserted, and it shall be reasserted. Nay, even a chance word, an obvious slip of the tongue, which would have no ill consequences were the word quickly recalled and replaced by a better, becomes of grave importance if obstinately persisted in. Falsehood by dint of repetition assumes in the minds of thoughtless hearers a semblance of truth. "If I have heard him say it once I have heard him say it a dozen times," is sometimes uttered in a tone that shows that no further proof is thought necessary. Great matters arise from minute causes. A mass of chalk, a thousand feet in thickness, geologists tell us, is entirely formed by the skeletons of animalcules of a hundredth of an inch in diameter. Even this transformation is not more marvellous than the growth

of a belief from an oft-repeated inaccuracy or scarcely conscious misrepresentation. The tendency to support a side, without the least investigation into its merits, is very wonderful. Embraced by accident though it be, directly it is embraced it assumes in the mind of its supporter a fictitious value; and the desire to find it meritorious quickly turns into a discovery that it is so. Most of us must have met with persons who will accept or deny a statement before they have even heard it properly set forth. Dickens, who had a quick eye for anything of this sort, has humorously taken it off:—

"'Louisa,' said Mr. Dombey, after a short pause, 'it is not to be supposed——'

"'Certainly not,' cried Mrs. Chick, hastening to anticipate a refusal [the last thing Mr. Dombey intended], 'I never thought it was.'

"Mr. Dombey looked at her impatiently, and resumed: 'It is not to be supposed, I say——'

"'And I say,' murmured Mrs. Chick, 'that I never thought it was.'

"'Good heavens! Louisa,' said Mr. Dombey.

"'No, my dear Paul,' she remonstrated, with tearful dignity, 'I must really be allowed to speak. I am not so clever, or so reasoning, or so eloquent, or so anything as you are. I know that very well. So much the worse for me. But if they were the last words I had to utter—and last words should be very solemn to you and me, Paul, after poor dear Fanny—I would still say I never thought it was. And what is more,' added Mrs. Chick, with increased dignity, as if she had held her crushing argument till the last, 'I never *did* think it was.'

"Mr. Dombey walked to the window and back again. 'It is not to be supposed, Louisa——' he said.

"Mrs. Chick had nailed her colours to the mast, and repeated 'I know it isn't.'"

Now this is scarcely a caricature. Most of us have probably heard persons of small mental capacity say triumphantly, "I may be right, or I may be wrong; but I have said it, and I will stick to it." And they do stick to it—with the pertinacity of a small mind. A complacent look of conscious virtue steals over their features as they boast of their adhesive propensities. The last thing to strike them is that constancy in error is no wisdom. And though at the time of the boast the admission, "I *may* be wrong," shows a consciousness of the possibility of a mistake, at the end of a few weeks all such consciousness is lost. "Whatever I told you at the time must be right," is said with an air of finality, "since it stands to reason I could not have dreamt it."

What characteristic does such an expression betray? Non-recognition of the extreme liability there is in every one to be inaccurate. "Examine your words well," says George Eliot, "and you will find that even when you have no motive to be false, it is a very hard thing to say the exact truth, even about your own immediate feelings—much harder than to say something fine about them, which is not the exact truth." But even without this anxiety to be fine, with every wish to be exact, the possibility of accuracy is very rare. For consider what it involves: a power to repeat correctly, to perceive and listen correctly, and a knowledge of how to sift evidence. For even grant that my informant has a rare gift of verbal accuracy, and is of

unusually clear mental perception, I have still to ask, Is his knowledge first-hand or second-hand? And if second-hand what are his proofs that it is reliable? The reasonable man, knowing the great rarity of accuracy, questions every fact that appears capable of doubt; is not offended to be asked for proofs of any statement he may volunteer; is not surprised, though he may be greatly distressed, to find himself convicted of inaccuracy, and endeavours to the utmost to remedy any harm he may have caused through his misrepresentations. The superstitious man questions nothing that agrees with his own preconceived theories, and is greatly offended at being asked, however courteously, for the authority upon which he bases his various statements.

How then shall we define the superstitious spirit? *As the tendency to embrace a statement with little or no investigation, and having embraced it to endow it with a spurious infallibility.* The Catholic is not the only mind to whom the doctrine of infallibility offers a keen attraction. Doubts are so perplexing, certainty is so soothing, that he who presumes to question a long-received axiom is considered a meddler, a busybody, a trampler upon authority. Especially is this the case with Morality. Morality, it is said, must be upheld by authority of some sort. Whether it be based upon revelation, or letter of the law, or will of the sovereign, some authority it must have. Withdraw all external control, and it will fall to the ground. It is this feeling, I believe, which is at the bottom of a good deal of the Sabbatarianism still lingering among us. "If a man does not think it wrong to break one commandment," is sometimes said, "what proof is there that he may not break all?"

And to those who hold that revealed religion is the sole basis for morality, such an argument is unanswerable. This idea of the inextricable union between morality and a particular form of religion gives rise to another effect—the dread to find any flaw in the title-deeds of the religion, lest it should bring about a social revolution. Many earnest thinkers have stifled their scientific doubts for fear of the moral results.

Familiar though I am with the writings of persons who reprehend all investigation into received dogmas, whether religious or moral, I was not prepared to find the following sentence penned by a writer of such repute as Mr. Froude. In the January number of "Good Words," 1881, he says:* "To raise a doubt about a creed established by general acceptance is a direct injury to the general welfare. Discussion about it is out of place, *for only bad men wish to question the rule of life which religion commands.*"† An astounding assertion truly! Does Mr. Froude really think that he who first presumed to question the lawfulness of a Hindoo widow immolating herself on her husband's pile was a "bad man"? Yet that was a rule of life emphatically commanded by her religion. Or, if he wishes to confine himself to his own country and the Christian religion, is he prepared to denounce as a "bad man" he who first doubted the humanity of burning for witchcraft? Yet, until the last two centuries persecution for witchcraft was a "rule of life" preached and accepted by every form of Christianity. Not alone by the Catholic, as is sometimes imagined, but also by the Protestant. "I would have no compassion on these witches," exclaims Luther. "I

* Page 19. † The italics are my own.

would burn them all!" Would it not be more true to say that only the exceptionally disinterested and courageous would brave the odium to reputation, the danger to life and property, brought about by venturing to question any "rule of life" commanded by religion? If a commandment is capable of reasonable obedience, why should it shrink from intelligent investigation? If it exact superstitious obedience, let us denounce it with our whole strength. There is scarcely a crime or degradation that has not obtained the sanction of some religion or other. Let it not be thought that I lightly pass by or despise the weight of Authority. That authority which has courted and stood the ordeal of free and fearless investigation has nothing but reverence from me. Is it not the outcome of the registered experiences of the best and wisest of our forerunners? It is not authority, but the superstitious petrifaction of authority that I condemn; that spirit which aspires to infallibility; that imagines that an immutable law can be made for a mutable race; that forgets that as we are inheritors of the Past, so are we destined to become the progenitors of the Future.

This prohibition of investigation not only injures by supporting a bad cause, but by weakening the support a good cause might otherwise have. In the words of Mr. Mill: "The peculiar evil of silencing an opinion is that it is robbing the human race; posterity as well as the existing generation; those who dissent from the opinion, still more than those who hold it. If the opinion is right, they are deprived of the opportunity of exchanging error for truth; if wrong, they lose, what is almost as great a benefit, the

clearer perception and livelier impression of truth produced by its collision with error."*

If we examine into the cause of this dread of religious and moral investigation, I think we shall be able to trace it to a scarcely conscious belief that morality is non-natural, requiring much extraneous propping, and not a growth or evolution of natural law. The great work of this century has been to extend the domain of Law throughout the whole of nature; and morality, we are slowly being taught, is no exception to the rule. Those who teach that morality is right *because* it is right to conform to the laws, mistake an effect for a cause. Laws would not have been instituted until it had been found by experience that is is good for man to be moral. In many cases Nature has written her commands so plainly that neither divine nor human lawgivers have thought it necessary to endorse them. There is, or perhaps I ought to say there was, no need. Civilisation, though she cannot radically alter, can so materially modify Nature's dealings that it is well to be reminded sometimes what her mandates are. Let me explain what I mean.

I have just now defined Morality as that which deals with man's duties towards his fellows. I should have said duties towards self and fellows; since, as Mr. Spencer has recently pointed out, egoistic duties must always take a slight priority over altruistic, because (if for no other reason) neglect of the former makes us unable to perform the latter. To use his own words, "A creature must live before it can act." "Unless each duly cares for himself, his care for all others is ended by death; and if each thus

* "Liberty," p. 33.

dies there remain no others to be cared for."* Morality, then, being that which treats of duties each owes to self and fellows, it follows that the ideally moral man is he who does most to further the welfare of self and fellows, and those virtues must be placed highest as they have tended to this end.

What, then, is that virtue which has done most for human welfare? Industry. Only by trying to bring before ourselves in imagination what the world would have been without industry, can we arrive at any proximate notion of the important part it has played in civilisation. Without it humanity would not now be; for without it the savage procured neither food, fuel, nor shelter, but perished of inanition. Those alone who laboured prospered, and left progeny with a like facility for work. Without it none of the amenities of life—decencies, refinements, arts, science—could either have existed, or, when existing, been fostered. And without the restraining and guiding influence of Industry, not one of those higher qualities which we have been taught to look upon distinctively as virtues, but exhibits a tendency to degenerate into vice. We have heard, perhaps, overmuch of late of the harm arising from what is vaguely termed "giving to the poor." I say overmuch, because I think the doctrine has shown itself capable of perversion. There are persons whose customary pittance to the poor has been doled out from no higher spirit than that of "other worldliness," who have gladly caught up the assertion that "giving" is pernicious, and twisted it into an excuse for withholding all assistance. Had they sought for accurate information

* "Data of Ethics," p. 187.

they would have discovered that it is not "giving," but "idle giving," that does harm—giving unaccompanied by industry; that oftentimes, where a donation of money is unadvisable, bestowal of time and thought is invaluable. Again patience, unaccompanied by industry, degenerates into apathy; with industry it becomes endurance. Even magnanimity, that exalted quality comprising tenderness, forgiveness, repayal of enmity by love, requires industrious thought and observation. If by returning a soft answer we can divert wrath, by all means let us do so, but in the majority of cases so to act only invites aggression, and directly encourages ill-temper. Perfect morality can only be attained by industry. In a word, we must, as the Apostle told us long ago, "labour to do good;" for verily, without labour, the best intentions lead to bad results.

Yet, mighty as has been the part this virtue has played in civilisation, being indeed from the earliest times its vivifying principle, a commandment to be industrious finds no place in the Decalogue;* neither do human lawgivers seem to have greatly troubled themselves about it. There was no need. Nature had an all-sufficient antidote for indolence in those rough times—extermination. Nor is her punishment less sure now. It is only less direct. Or it might be more true to say that civilisation has rendered her operations less apparent. Through long accumulation of inherited capital, it is not always the least worthy who suffer most want. Yet Nature is inexorable in her penalties. As in the more savage days she taught by deprivation of food the necessary lesson that if a man will not

* Unless, indeed, we take the earlier passages of the Fourth Commandment as an injunction to work: "Six days shalt thou work."

work neither shall he eat; so now she teaches it by deprivation of appetite, not alone for food, but for all the higher pleasures of life. The capacity for enjoyment—especially mental enjoyment—dies out if never exercised. "Next to selfishness," says Mr. Mill,* "the principal cause which makes life unsatisfactory is want of mental cultivation." Few sights impress me more sadly than that of persons verging towards old age, after lives of great worldly prosperity, unable to find satisfaction in one of the luxuries surrounding them, because of the apathy that has grown to be so great that they cannot even take the trouble to be amused. If, as we have seen, the ideally moral are those who do most to further the welfare of self and fellows, the extremely indolent are the ideally immoral, since not only have they done nothing to further the welfare of their fellows, but have made their own lives a source of misery to themselves and all with whom they come in contact.

The virtue second in importance to industry for the welfare of the species, is the duty of parents to offspring. This likewise finds no place in the Decalogue. Again there was no need. He alone who carefully tended his offspring, preserved it, and left descendants of like nature to himself; till through the principle of Heredity parental love has grown to be innate. The parent who is without it being regarded by the psychologist as by the anatomist are the deformed—anomalies and exceptions to an otherwise invariable order.

See then what I mean—that the wisest among our early lawgivers have never weakened their authority by super-

* "Utilitarianism," p. 20.

fluous insistance upon duties Nature had already rendered sufficiently imperative. Those moral duties that have occupied the attention of lawgivers of all time have been not those towards self and offspring, but towards fellows, who by the uncivilised are regarded more or less as enemies. The cause is not far to seek. He who could only judge of proximate and not ultimate results saw nothing but benefit arise from aggression. The murderer gratified his feelings of revenge; the thief appropriated his victim's property. Only those who were of comparatively large brain foresaw the great dangers arising from insecurity to life and property; perceived the immense advantage co-operation had over antagonism. The inculcation of justice and benevolence therefore has been the aim of all great moral teachers. These qualifications are "rules of life" that shrink from no investigation, either from good or bad men. The experience of the wisest of our forerunners has laid it down as a law that it is good for man to be just and beneficent, and no amount of questioning will weaken their authority to posterity, though possibly the notion of what true beneficence consists may be somewhat altered. Yet it is just possible, far off as it seems now, that even the inculcation of justice and benevolence may grow to be superfluous; that in future generations they will, through heredity, be engraven upon the mind as parental love is already engraven; they will be innate. Even now, many of us must have met with persons who shrink instinctively from actions that are cruel, unjust or mean; to whom the inculcation of justice and benevolence would be superfluous. Different ages require different ethical lessons; and the moral teacher who is reasonable and not supersti-

tious—in other words, he who has in view the welfare of his fellows instead of acting in slavish submission to tradition—alters the character of his teaching according to the circumstances to be dealt with. Judicial Law, for instance, modifying Natural Law, has rendered the punishment for murder and theft so direct as to make it almost superfluous to dilate upon it. Civilised life, on the contrary, has rendered the punishment for indolence so indirect that it is very necessary attention should be drawn to it. It would be superfluous indeed for the clergyman to impress upon the fine lady of his congregation the commandment, Thou shalt not steal. It would be beneficial if he would prove to her that her lassitude, hysteria, broodings over imaginary grievances, and all the numerous ills of modern well-to-do womanhood are the penalties she has brought upon herself by the breach of that first of Nature's laws, Thou shalt be industrious.*

Upon the more morally evolved the chief lesson to be impressed is, it appears to me, *not to shrink from acknowledging facts which stare them in the face.* In other words, the great ethical requisite of the higher natures among us is that of investigating truths for themselves. Few actions have been proved by their melancholy results to be more absolutely fatal than deliberately closing the eyes to facts which are patent. Foolish besides, since a fact does not become less a fact because we refuse to look at it. Little as he may think it, the man who refuses to investigate a

* I believe it is Martin Luther who said, "The mind is like a mill that cannot stop working; give it something to grind and it will grind *that.* If it has nothing to grind, it grinds on still; but it is itself it grinds and wears away."

doctrine because he is afraid it may turn out to be true betrays a preference for falsehood which he imagines will comfort him, to truth which he fears may cause him discomfort. Wherein he shows his folly. No falsehood can confer other than transitory relief. Good cannot proceed from evil, nor light from darkness. So falsehood begets misery. All History (if treated in a philosophical spirit) discloses the immense amount of suffering that has been caused through lack of fearless though reverent investigation of every doctrine before it is accepted.*

* In the present day this moral and religious cowardice is a fault belonging in a much greater degree to women than to men. I quote the following admirable passage from the final chapter in Mr. Lecky's "History of Morals":—"While a multitude of scientific discoveries, critical and historical researches, and educational reforms have brought thinking men face to face with religious problems of extreme importance, women have been almost absolutely excluded from their influence. . . . Contracted knowledge and imperfect sympathy are not the sole fruits of this education. It has always been the peculiarity of a certain kind of theological teaching that it inverts all the normal principles of judgment, and absolutely destroys intellectual diffidence. On other subjects we find, if not a respect for honest conviction, at least some sense of the amount of knowledge that is requisite to entitle men to express an opinion on grave controversies. . . . But on theological questions this has never been so. . . . Many men and most women, though completely ignorant of the very rudiments of biblical criticism, historical research, or scientific discoveries, . . . will nevertheless adjudicate with the utmost confidence upon every polemical question; denounce, hate, pity or pray for the conversion of all who dissent from what they have been taught; assume, as a matter beyond the faintest possibility of doubt, that the opinions they have received without inquiry must be true, and that the opinions which others have arrived at by inquiry must be false, and make it a main object of their lives to assail what they call heresy in every way in their power, except by examining the grounds on which it rests. . . . Innumerable pulpits support this tone of thought, and represent, with a fervid rhetoric well fitted to excite the nerves and imaginations

Though we have outgrown many superstitions, there is a fatal one existing among us to which sufficient attention has not been drawn. It is that anthropomorphic conception of Nature which makes men think it a virtue to cheat themselves into the belief that her laws and method are what they think they ought to be, instead of learning by patient investigation what they really are. Because man shrinks from the injustice of making the innocent suffer for the guilty, he conceives Nature must do so likewise. Yet to believe this is to disbelieve the doctrine of Heredity. "That all sin is avenged upon earth," says Dr. Maudesley, "is true; but it is not true that a man cannot escape the consequences of his ill-doing; it would be more true to say that a man cannot escape the consequences of a man's ill-doing."* Nay, it does not require the nineteenth century to teach us this. The great thinkers of old were never weary of pointing out that "The fathers eat sour grapes and the children's teeth are set on edge;" that "the sins of the fathers shall be visited upon the children to the third and fourth generation."

A habit of investigation at once raises and alters our conception of our various duties. It sets before us a higher motive for industry than mere pursuit of self-gratification. It is unhappily a too patent fact that man can degenerate

of women, the deplorable condition of all who deviate from a certain type of opinions; a blind propagandism or a secret wretchedness penetrates into countless households, poisoning the peace of families, chilling the mutual confidence of husband and wife, adding immeasurably to the difficulties which every searcher into truth has to encounter, and diffusing far and wide intellectual timidity, disingenuousness and hypocrisy."

* "Responsibility in Mental Disease," p. 306.

as well as develop, and unless he cultivate his faculties to the utmost they will inevitably be passed on to his children in a state of decadence. It supplements the inculcation of indiscriminate charity by leading "men to see that true beneficence is that which helps a man to do the work he is most fitted for, not that which keeps and encourages him in idleness; and that to neglect this distinction in the present is to prepare pauperism and misery for the future."* It teaches that a parent's duty does not consist alone in kindness or in discipline; nor even, as is so often taught by example now, in laying up great wealth for the future; but in so living that he shall be enabled to confer upon his offspring the inestimable benefit of a physically and mentally healthy constitution. As Mr. Spencer has well remarked—"Of all bequests of parents to children the most valuable is a sound constitution. Though a man's body is not a property that can be inherited, yet his constitution may fitly be compared to an entailed estate; and if he rightly understand his duty to posterity he will see that he is bound to pass on that estate uninjured, if not improved." †

We are so conversant with the difficulty of attaining virtue that we are apt to think more of the means than the end—apt to give greater honour to the difficulty to be conquered than to the virtue to be attained. And in a measure this is right. Our resolution to conquer our evil tendencies receives a keen support from the encouragement of those we most revere, who, as a rule, proportion their praise in ratio with our difficulty. Only let us never forget

* Clifford's "Lectures and Essays," vol. ii., p. 202.

† "Data of Ethics," p. 192.

that this difficulty is a sign of our imperfection, not of our perfection. The athlete who delights in his exploits is a finer walker than the child who can barely run. The musician who delights in his effusions gives us keener pleasure than the girl painfully stumbling over her scales. So the man who has received the inestimable advantage of a fine intellect and kind heart will be a source of greater welfare to his fellows than one whose life is a perpetual warfare between his anxiety to do what he knows to be right and the almost irresistible promptings of an innately wicked organism. I like Dr. Maudesley's comparison of Healthiness to Holiness.* He who is so physically healthy as to find industry a necessity to him; he who is so morally healthy as to find benevolence a delight to him; he who is so mentally healthy as to find the higher pleasures of the intellect alone attractive to him, is the ideally moral man; will lead the ideally moral life; will be a source of much greater happiness to himself and his fellows than if he had inherited much wealth with a weakly body or unhealthy mind. We have already seen that industry is the first commandment laid upon man; but in the majority of cases the inheritance of wealth removes that great incentive to industry—Dread of Want.

Not only is that diffused sense of well-being that comes from a nature that is throughout healthful a joy to its possessor, but it is a joy that is in greater or less degree imparted to all who are brought into contact with it. There are few virtues more thoroughly diffusive than that Cheerfulness which is for the most part confined to the thoroughly healthy man or woman. Like most other virtues, it acts

* "Responsibility in Mental Disease," p. 286.

and reacts upon itself, blessing him that takes and him that receives; and though it arises for the most part from health, it must also be remembered that a habit of cheerfulness will, in no small degree, administer to health.

In no religious system that I am acquainted with are the benefits of cheerfulness sufficiently insisted upon, and in very few philosophical. There are two notable instances among the latter, however, which I will cite. Let us take the earlier philosopher first, Spinoza. In the 41st proposition of the Fourth Part of his "Ethics," Spinoza says: "Gaiety (*laetitia*) is not directly evil, but is good; grief or sadness, on the contrary, is directly evil." And he demonstrates the proposition thus—"Gaiety is an affection whereby the power of the body to act is aided or increased. Grief, on the contrary, is one whereby this power is lessened or repressed; and so is gaiety directly good, grief directly bad."

In the 42nd proposition he almost repeats himself. He says:—"Cheerfulness, contentment (*hilaritas*), can have nothing of excess about it; melancholy, discontent (*melancholia*), on the other hand, is always evil." And this proposition Spinoza defined almost as the preceding one: "Cheerfulness is joy, which referred to the body consists in this—that all its parts are affected alike and in like measure; that is, that the power of the body to act is increased or assisted, and in such wise that all its parts acquire reciprocally motion and rest in the same ratio. It is in this way that hilarity or cheerfulness is always good, and cannot be excessive. Melancholy, on the other hand, is grief, which as referred to the body consists in this—

that its power of action is lessened or absolutely abrogated, so that the emotion is always bad."

In the second scholium to the 45th proposition Spinoza develops this at greater length. He says, "I acknowledge a great difference between mockery, which I have but just characterised as bad, and laughter or jest. For laughter and jest also are a kind of gladness, and so, if they have nothing of excess about them, are good. Nothing, indeed, but a sour and gloomy superstition forbids us to enjoy ourselves. Why should it be held more seemly to satisfy the cravings of hunger and thirst than to drive away melancholy? These are my views; these my sentiments. No divinity, none but an envious being, could take pleasure in my helplessness and suffering; nor do tears, and sobs, and fear, and other affections of the sort, which are but evidences of an abject and feeble spirit, ever lead to virtuous conduct; the more joyfully we feel, on the contrary, to the higher grade of perfection do we rise; in other words, the more do we necessarily partake of the Divine nature. To use the good things of life, therefore, and to enjoy ourselves, in so far as this may be done short of satiety and disgust—for here excess were not enjoyment—is true wisdom. It is wisdom, I say, in man to refresh and recreate himself by moderate indulgence in pleasant meats and drinks, to take delight in sweet odours, to admire the beauties of plants and flowers, to dress becomingly, to join in manly and athletic sports and games, to frequent the theatre and other places of the sort, all of which may be done without injury to others. For the human frame is compacted of many parts of diverse nature, which continually crave fresh and varied

aliment in order that the whole body may be alike fit for everything whereof by its nature it is capable, and consequently that the mind also may be in a state to take interest in and understand the greatest possible variety of subjects." And the concluding proposition in his "Ethics" runs thus: "Beatitude is not the reward of virtue, but virtue itself; nor do we enjoy true happiness because we restrain our lusts. On the contrary, it is because we enjoy true happiness that we are able to restrain our lusts."*

The other philosopher who insists upon the beneficial results of cheerfulness is Herbert Spencer. The similarity of his teaching on this wise is so close as to be somewhat striking, especially as it is evidently quite unconscious. "Every power," he says, "bodily and mental, is increased by 'good spirits,' which is our name for a general emotional satisfaction. The truth that the fundamental vital actions—those of nutrition—are furthered by laughter-moving conversations, or rather by the pleasurable feeling causing laughter, is one of old standing, and every dyspeptic knows that, in exhilarating company, a large and varied dinner, including not very digestible things, may be eaten with impunity, and, indeed, with benefit, while a small, carefully-chosen dinner of simple things, eaten in solitude, will be followed by indigestion. This striking effect on the alimentary system is accompanied by effects, equally certain though less manifest, on the circulation and the respiration. Again, one who, released from

* In these extracts from Spinoza's "Ethics" I have availed myself of Dr. Willis's translation. Dr. Willis is not, for the most part, considered to be a very accurate translator, but if the English reader will compare the above passage with pp. 263, 264 of Mr. Pollock's masterly work on Spinoza, he will see that in this case the essential meaning is accurately preserved.

daily labours and anxieties, receives delight from fine scenery, or is enlivened by the novelties he sees abroad, comes back showing by toned-up face and vivacious manner the greater energy with which he is prepared to pursue his avocation. Invalids, especially, on whose narrowed margin of vitality the influence of conditions is most visible, habitually show the benefits derived from agreeable states of feeling. A lively social circle, the call of an old friend, or even removal to a brighter room, will, by the induced cheerfulness, much improve the physical state. In brief, as every medical man knows, there is no such tonic as happiness." *

And again he says: "Bounding out of bed after an unbroken sleep, singing or whistling as he dresses, coming down with beaming face, ready to laugh on the smallest provocation, the healthy man of high powers, conscious of past successes, and, by his energy, quickness, and resource, made confident of the future, enters on the day's business, not with repugnance, but with gladness, and from hour to hour experiencing satisfaction from work effectually done, comes home with an abundant surplus of energy remaining for hours of relaxation. . . . . He who carries self-regard far enough to keep himself in good health and high spirits, in the first place thereby becomes an immediate source of happiness to those around, and in the second place maintains the ability to increase their happiness by altruistic actions. . . . . In estimating conduct we must remember that there are those who by their joyousness beget joy in others, and that there are those who by their melancholy cast a gloom on every

* "Data of Ethics," pp. 90, 91.

circle they enter. And we must remember that by display of overflowing happiness a man of the one kind may add to the happiness of others more than by positive efforts to benefit them; and that a man of the other kind may decrease their happiness more by his presence than he increases it by his actions. Full of vivacity, the one is ever welcome. For his wife he has smiles and jocose speeches; for his children, stores of fun and play; for his friends, pleasant talk interspersed with sallies of wit that come from buoyancy. Contrariwise, the other is shunned. The irritability, resulting now from ailments, now from failures caused by feebleness, his family has daily to bear. Lacking adequate energy for joining in them, he has at best but a tepid interest in the amusements of his children, and he is called a wet blanket by his friends. Little account as our ethical reasonings take note of it, yet is the fact obvious, that, since happiness and misery are infectious, such regard for self as conduces to health and high spirits is a benefaction to others, and such disregard of self as brings on suffering, bodily or mental, is a malefaction to others. The duty of making one's self agreeable by seeming to be pleased is indeed often urged, and thus to gratify friends is applauded so long as self-sacrificing effort is implied. But though display of real happiness gratifies friends far more than display of sham happiness, and has no drawback in the shape either of hypocrisies or strain, yet it is not thought a duty to fulfil the conditions which favour the display of real happiness. Nevertheless, if quantity of happiness produced be the real measure, the last is more imperative than the first." *

* "Data of Ethics," pp. 190, 193, 194.

Cheerfulness, as a virtue, is so little insisted on that I have thought it right to quote the above passages from two philosophers who, as I venture to think, rank second to none. Yet it must be remembered that even our greatest thinkers can but modify the order of nature. By insistance upon duties that are not obvious to the unthinking they can accelerate, but they cannot radically alter her results. Take this habit of Cheerfulness, for instance; if, in the words of Richter, "cheerfulness or joyfulness is the atmosphere under which all things thrive"; if a habit of Cheerfulness conduces to health, and if healthy people are more likely to leave healthy offspring, does not it follow that the time will come when melancholy persons will be in the minority—perhaps, indeed, have disappeared altogether?

The moral quality most difficult to account for upon natural causation is, as it seems to me, that sublime quality which goes by the name of Conscientiousness. It is this difficulty, I believe, that has made many men—not otherwise prone to believe in supernatural interference—imagine that the Conscience is a Divine gift, higher even than the Reason, belonging not only to the mind but to the soul. This conscientiousness, it is argued, is alone sufficient to show that man differs from the brute not only in degree, but altogether; that is to say, in kind.

I am not able to agree with those who argue in this wise. If the Conscience is a Divine gift implanted in man by a merciful Creator to point the way to the right and to lead him away from the wrong, why has it so often represented as virtue that which we all now recognise as hideous vice? That it has done this is, I think, unquestionable. Mr. Lecky has hardly exaggerated when he

asserts as an instance that "Philip II. and Isabella the Catholic inflicted more suffering in obedience to their consciences than Nero and Domitian in obedience to their lusts." Moreover if it were thus providentially bestowed upon man as an unerring guide through life, surely it should be impartially bestowed upon all in equal division; yet it is obvious that this quality of conscientiousness is as unequally distributed among different individuals as are other mental qualities. Even children of the same family, and brought up under the same influences, differ greatly in sensitiveness of conscience.

At the same time it is not altogether easy to account for the imperativeness of this quality when it does exist, upon the interpretation that it has always played a paramount part in the production of the welfare of the species. Though there are many cases where it has certainly conduced to this end, there are many, I think, where neither egoistically nor altruistically can it be said to have been of much avail. Sensitively conscientious little lads, born of Calvinistic ancestry and brought up by Calvinistic parents, or born of High Church ancestry and surrounded with High Church influences, suffer keenly when suddenly transported to the atmosphere of a Public School. If they are healthy children, their instincts are strongly prompting them to do what nevertheless their consciences will not let them do; that is, in the one case to laugh or to whistle on a Sunday, in the other to eat meat on a Friday. To refrain from such actions is certainly not beneficial to the boys; in a slight degree it is rather hurtful, and it does not conduce to the welfare of their schoolfellows, in whom are very often excited feelings of mockery and cruelty. If the child suffers

egoistically from his abstention from play or food, he probably suffers still more, altruistically, from the dislike he excites in his fellows. It may, perhaps, be said that the child is impelled to obey his conscience by the fear of future reward or punishment. It may be so in some cases, but certainly not in all. At least, speaking personally, when I was a young child I was often impelled to refrain from actions that I now know to be perfectly innocent. So far as I remember, the idea of future rewards and punishments seldom, if ever, occurred to me. I was simply impelled to obey my conscience by some uncontrollable inward prompting. Yet, though the part this faculty of conscience has played has not been entirely productive of good; though at times, in addition to making men refrain from innocent joys, it has, as in the days of persecution, prompted them to deeds of atrocity, still on the whole, I think, its influence has been high and holy; and, like most high and holy things, of delicate growth and easily killed. In little children especially it is to be encouraged rather than thwarted. When a child is old enough to be able to exercise reason and judgment, then, indeed, it is permissible to show that such and such actions are innocent; but while it is too young to be able to judge for itself, most persons, I think, will agree that he who would tempt a child, either by mockery or more open punishment, to do what his conscience forbade him to do, would be gravely reprehensible. Of such an one we might almost say, "It were better that a mill-stone were hanged about his neck and he cast into the sea, than that he should offend one of these little ones."

But to assert the power of conscience is not to describe

it, or to account for it. In a variety of ways it has been described and accounted for. Let us examine into a few of them. Dr. Whewell, for instance, as quoted by Professor Bain,* asserts, that "as the object of reason is to determine what is true, so the object of conscience is to determine what is right." Now this seems to me a very inadequate description. Surely the object of reason is to determine what is true as well as what is right, and having done this, then conscience steps in and forces the man to do what his reason has proved to him to be the true and the right; "*true*" and "*right*" being indeed almost synonymous terms; though, perhaps, the latter term is more generally applied to conduct than the former.

Professor Bain himself, in an exhaustive analysis of Conscience,† writes thus :—

"I have purposely deferred the consideration of Conscience as a distinct attribute or faculty, from a conviction that this portion of our constitution is moulded upon external authority as its type. I entirely dissent from Dugald Stewart, and the great majority of writers on the Theory of Morals, who represent Conscience as a primitive and independent faculty of the mind, which would be developed in us although we never had any experience of external authority. On the contrary, I maintain that Conscience is an imitation within ourselves of the government without us; and even when differing in what it describes from the current morality, the mode of its action is still parallel to the archetype. . . . All that we understand by the authority of conscience—the sentiment of obligation, the feeling of right, the sting of remorse—can be nothing

* "Emotions and the Will," p. 260, second edition.

† *Ibid.*, pp. 283—287, second edition.

else than so many modes of expressing the acquired aversion and dread towards certain actions associated in the mind with such consequences as have now been described. Trace out as we may the great variety of forms assumed by the sentiment, the essential nature of it is still what we have said. The dread of anticipated evil operating to restrain before the fact, and the pain, realised after the act has been performed, are perfectly intelligible products of the education of the mind under a system of authority and of an experience had of the good and evil consequences of actions."

Now, although (with the exception of a few original thinkers) the morality of every individual is undoubtedly the current morality of his age and country—it requiring no great amount of historical knowledge to show that many actions judged to be immoral in one nation and century were regarded as more or less innocent in another—it seems to me that the deterring power of "external authority" and the deterring power of conscience are quite distinct deterrents. Actions that are committed inadvertently will bring about great dread of punishment, though the conscience is perfectly easy. Suppose, by way of illustration, that I go to a jeweller's shop where neither I nor my family name are known. Suppose, by some unhappy inadvertence, a ring of great price that is on the counter becomes attached to my sleeve. The shopman, seeing this and not knowing me, promptly calls a policeman. Well, my conscience is perfectly free, but the dread of punishment is, for all that, strong within me. I like by no means the prospect of spending the night in a police-cell. There is the far greater apprehension that I shall not be able to

prove my innocence, and shall leave an indelible stain upon my name. There is the anxiety that my non-arrival at home will cause alarm to those who are dear to me. The anticipated punishment, indeed, is felt so keenly by me that I would willingly give half my fortune to be relieved from the fear of it. Yet all this time I do not suffer at all through my conscience. Now, on the other side, suppose I have been indulging in suspicions of my friend that I subsequently find to be wholly unfounded. Here there will be no dread of punishment, since my thoughts have never grown to actions nor even to words. Yet my conscience will probably prick me severely. Indeed, not only do fear of conscience and fear of external authority seem to me distinct, but at times absolutely opposed. To escape the one we will often court the other. Sensitively conscientious persons who have been betrayed by passion or resentment into horrible crimes will often deliver themselves up to justice to escape the agony of their conscience. Constance Kent, the Road murderess, is a case in point.

Professor Clifford has a different interpretation to offer. He describes conscience as "Self-judgment in the name of the tribe." * Yet even this definition—much better though it is than the two others we have been considering—does not seem altogether borne out by the facts. "Self-judgment in the name of the tribe" seems to me to be the germ of general sympathy or fellow-feeling rather than of that hidden monitor, the Conscience. Sympathy, though it may often lead to the same results, is, I think, in its essence quite distinct from Conscience. It is the basis of all our altruistic feelings, and as I shall endeavour subsequently

* "Lectures and Essays," vol. ii., p. 114.

to show, is a more fundamental, and will be a more lasting element in our moral nature. If we try to decompose this quality, "fellow-feeling in the name of the tribe," into its component parts, we shall find, I think, that they consist of "sympathy" and two other qualities that are somewhat dissimilar. In "the name of the tribe" may mean *fear of the tribe*, which is a particular form of the general fear of "external authority," or it may mean (and probably Professor Clifford did mean this) *loyalty or fidelity to the tribe*. No doubt Conscience has a good deal to do with keeping men faithful to their tribe; but it is the motive power at work, not the thing itself. In almost every religion there are cases on record of reformers, apostles, enthusiasts, and converts being compelled by their consciences to leave not only father and mother but tribe also. Again, Conscience has so often prompted men to suppress "fellow-feeling" that I do not see how it can be *identified* with it, however qualified.

The late Rev. F. D. Maurice, in his very suggestive work on the Conscience, seems to me truer in his diagnosis than any of the authors we have been considering. There is much to be said, I think, for the connection he traces between "consciousness of wrong or right" and the "conscience." His definition of the conscientious man as "one who is always considering what he ought or ought not to do," and of the "conscience" as "that in me which says, 'I ought or ought not,'" seems to me sustained by all our experience of it; and his criticism upon Mr. Bain's identification of the Conscience with fear of external authority is so admirable that I will quote it:—"If the child is taught to have a dread of him [*i.e.*, the teacher] as

one who is an inflicter of pain, not to have a reverence for him as one who cares for it and is seeking to save it from its own folly—if the child is instructed to separate carefully the pain which rises out of its own acts from the pain which the parent inflicts, so that it may associate the pain with him rather than with them—then all has been done which human art can do to make it grow up a contemptible coward, crouching to every majority which threatens it with the punishments that it has learnt to regard as the greatest and only evils; one who may at last, 'in the maturity of a well-disposed mind,' become the spontaneous agent of a majority in trampling out in others the freedom which has been so assiduously trampled out in itself. A parent or a teacher who pursues this object is of all the ministers of a community the one whom it should regard with the greatest abhorrence, seeing that he is bringing up for it not citizens but slaves." *

It seems to me that Conscience is that power within us which forces us to do what we believe to be right. This may not always be the actually right. A proper comprehension of true morality, a nice discrimination between what is right and what is wrong, pertains to the judgment or to the experience of self or others. But having once satisfied oneself as to what is the right course to pursue, Conscience is that power which imperatively forces us to follow it. Can we account for its strength and comparative universality? It is difficult; yet I think we may attempt to do so. Is it not possible that the theory of Evolution may bridge over the gap between the extremes of Experience and Intuition, and that in the "inherited experiences

* Page 58.

of ancestors" we may find the solution and true meaning of Conscience? For after all, if we set aside those prohibitions, the mere utterances of priestcraft, and all other traditions and authorities that "shrink from reasonable investigation," we shall find that the moral instincts of various races differ only in degree, not in kind. Though in one country polygamy may be enjoined and in another not tolerated, yet nowhere is purity without reverence and esteem. Though in one country personal revenge be supplemented by legal penalty, yet nowhere is uncalled-for cruelty admirable, while ingratitude to benefactors is condemned fully as much by the savage as by the civilised man. No doubt the association of pain with wrong-doing may have originated our shrinking from wrong-doing; but the fear of external authority, or of being "found out," and the instinctive shrinking from vice, are, I believe, in their spirit utterly distinct. Indeed, that indescribable, though torturing, sense of moral disquietude afflicts us more, I think, when we have done our neighbour secret wrong than when we have done that which will come under the penalty of external authority—so long, that is to say, as the wrong-doing is intentional. I do not think that we suffer the stings of conscience when we are innocent in intention. If we are the innocent cause of our neighbour's losing some good or incurring some evil, we suffer then from a subtle intermixture of compunction and sympathy. But though this feeling has a certain resemblance in its effects to a guilty conscience, in its essential nature I believe it to be wholly distinct.

But surely this power, which forces us to do actions we hold to be right, whether because the contrary action would

be against the teaching of some Divine Exemplar, or a blot upon that high moral ideal we have formed for ourselves, based upon a consciousness of the grand possibilities there are in a truly moral life, a delicate, sensitive conscience must in the long run be of benefit to the race. External authority punishes open vice; a tender conscience punishes the spirit that precedes and leads to vice. External authority punishes libel, theft, murder; a tender conscience punishes censoriousness, covetousness, cruelty; and as nothing can come out of a man that has not been previously in him, vice is prevented at a much less expenditure of energy (chiefly in the form of misery) to self and fellows than by exercise of external authority.*

Nevertheless, powerful as has been the part Conscience has played in the formation of character, it seems to me quite conceivable that the time may come when Conscience, being no longer required, will cease to exist. Consider what are its functions. To rebuke us when we commit actions or give way to thoughts that we hold to be wrong. These thoughts and actions may arise from our lower nature having greater power over us than our higher, in which case they are actually wrong; or they may be simply disobedience of some superstitious beliefs, in which case

* To guard against obscurity let me add that those inherited experiences of our ancestors, which make us instinctively shrink from vice from the fear of any evil consequences to *ourselves*, should be regarded as innate or instinctive *prudence*. The same instinctive shrinking from fear of evil consequences to our victims, or from dread of wounding or offending a Divine Teacher, or from dislike of doing anything unworthy of the dignity of man, or of any high moral ideal we may have formed, is instinctive *conscience*. Injury to self provokes prudential remorse; injury to others conscientious remorse.

they are only imaginatively wrong. But it must be obvious to all that we are by degrees shaking ourselves free from superstitious beliefs; and among the more educated, at all events, we may reasonably hope that it will not be very long before they are discarded altogether. In that case it will be those actions alone that are actually wrong that will draw down the stings of conscience. Well, is it not just possible that in the course of many generations our lower instincts will have dwindled away before the power of the higher ones? A consummation such as this seems indeed so far off at present that I can imagine a smile of scepticism being raised before a prophecy so optimistic. But if we compare even now the civilised man with the uncivilised, and note that vices in the latter have become instinctively impossible in the former, my conception will not seem so absurd. It requires, for instance, no exercise of conscience to restrain the refined lady from committing immodest actions, simply because such actions would be impossibilities to her. It requires no exercise of conscience to prevent the refined gentleman from running away with his neighbour's silver spoons, simply because such a notion would never enter into his head.* Well, it seems to me that

* It is only, however, the commoner forms o honesty and decency that have as yet become instinctive in the average man or woman. The large supply of objectionable novels, created presumably by the demand for them, too sufficiently shows that, though there may be instinctive shrinking from indelicate actions, there is at present no instinctive repugnance to the presentation of indelicate scenes or suggestions. In like manner the finer sense of honesty is still very far from being perfectly developed in the average man or woman. Think how thoughtlessly a fine lady will run up a milliner's bill that she may or may not be able to pay; or think what a constant habit it is with editors of magazines to accept and faithfully promise to insert articles, and then, if something of more

the time may come, far off as it is now, that justice, and benevolence, and industry will, through heredity, have become as instinctive in us as are the commoner forms of

topical interest comes in, return them at the eleventh hour to the author. The time I hope will come when "getting into debt" and "breach of contract" will become as instinctively impossible as are now the grosser forms of stealing. The great moral development of this century seems to me to lie rather in the growth of the sympathies than in decency or honesty. A century ago women were flogged in public for trifling offences; young lads, and even girls, were hanged for stealing a sovereign; and worse than all, these degraded punishments seemed to excite a degraded feeling of enjoyment in witnessing them, even in the educated. It was no uncommon thing for a fine lady to pay ten pounds for a window from which she might witness an execution. I very much question whether the most absolutely frivolous and worthless fine lady would not pay ten pounds down in these days to escape such a sight. How much more fully developed as yet are the sympathetic feelings than the decent ones is shown I think by the way that men, and even, I regret to say, women, will gloat over the objectionable revelations of the Divorce Court; but it is certainly with feelings of repugnance and pain rather than enjoyment that we read any tale of abominable cruelty—from a captain at sea, for instance, to a poor little cabin-boy. Novels after the style of "Never Too Late to Mend," if published now would give far more pain, I think, than pleasure. Thoughtful persons, anxious for prison reform, will read them much as students of the Renaissance and Middle Ages will wade through the harrowing details of the Inquisition. But it is only duty that compels them to do so. To them, and also to the uncultivated (with a few morbid exceptions), the perusal certainly does the reverse of amuse or give enjoyment. Quite recently, almost within the last ten or fifteen years, there seems also to be a great growth in fellow-feeling with the sufferings of animals. More than one friend has told me it gives no *pleasure* to them now to kill a rabbit. If rabbits overrun their property they kill them from necessity, but from no delight in the act of killing. And to see thirty or forty dogs set upon a fox is repugnant to them rather than pleasurable. It seems to me probable that before the next century is very far advanced hunting and shooting will have altogether ceased as sports, as now have bull-fights and gladiator exhibitions.

decency and honesty in the educated; or as the promptings of self-preservation and love of offspring are, in the educated and uneducated alike. In a word, when that time comes—if it should—we shall be so mentally and morally *healthy* that we shall not require physic in the shape of an accusing conscience. And since all faculties die out when no longer used, so it seems to me conceivable that a time will come when Conscience, having ceased for some time to be required, will at last die out for lack of exercise.

"But," it may be said, "if morality is intrinsic, not extrinsic—if it be true that, in the words of the Preacher,* 'As righteousness tendeth to life, so he that pursueth evil pursueth it to his own death'—why trouble ourselves at all about the inculcation of morality? Why not leave it all to the 'Universal Plan,' knowing that evil must eventually disappear and the righteous alone inherit the earth?"

Because by fearless investigation of the laws of Nature we may in a measure become fellow-workers with her. Because her unsupported efforts, though sure, are exceedingly slow, and always at the expense of much dissemination of misery, which, were we to co-operate with her, would be perfectly preventible. Take the crime of drunkenness, for instance. It is an acknowledged *dictum* of medical science that drunkenness in parents, especially that form known as dipsomania, may become the occasion of slight mental derangement in the child; if the latter continue in the drunken ways of his father, of insanity in the grandchild, which, increasing from generation to generation, will end finally in the extreme degeneration of idiocy, accompanied with extinction of family.

* Proverbs xi. 19.

See, then, the immense amount of misery that must propagate itself before Nature, by her unassisted efforts, will cause the seed of the drunkard to disappear from the earth. That superstition which takes the form of anthropomorphic conception of providential interposition has much to answer for, in the misery man has brought upon himself. He will never learn self-control till he has freed himself from it; till he has convinced himself that all wrong-doing is irrevocable; that he is not an isolated exception in the realms of law, above it and beyond it, but a part and product of Nature, as dependent upon her laws as are the planets and tides. "Is there any fundamental difference," asks Dr. Maudesley, "between the savage coming to destruction through ignorance of the law of gravitation, and the civilised European coming to madness through ignorance of the laws of his own nature, and of the laws of the nature of things and men around him?" Teach him honestly that consequences are inexorable; and that whatever effect prayer and death-bed repentance may have upon his own soul, they are powerless to prevent the evil of his drunken life being visited on his innocent child. That child, indeed, may do much under proper guidance to neutralise the bad effects of his organism; yet the effort required in such a case is tremendous, being "no less than a continued struggle to oppose the strong bent of his being." It is of little avail to denounce the doctrine of the stringency of law in moral as well as physical nature as materialistic or worse. Nature works on as sublimely indifferent to opprobrium as to ridicule. Did the stars dissolve into nothingness be-

cause Galileo's contemporaries refused to gaze at them through his telescope?*

* Mr. Lecky's noble, and in all other respects admirable chapter on the Natural History of Morals, is, I think, a little vitiated by his non-recognition of the immense part Heredity has played, and in all probability will always play, in the welfare of the Species. Arguing against the utilitarian theory of morals, he says ("History of European Morals," vol. i., p. 59), "If happiness in any of its forms be the supreme object of life, moderation is the most emphatic counsel of our being; but moderation is as much opposed to heroism as to vice. There is no form of intellectual or moral excellence which has not a general tendency to produce happiness if cultivated in moderation. There are very few which, if cultivated to great perfection, have not a tendency directly the reverse. Thus a mind that is sufficiently enlarged to range abroad amid the pleasures of intellect has no doubt secured a fund of inexhaustible enjoyment; but he who inferred from this that the highest intellectual eminence was the condition most favourable to happiness would be lamentably deceived. The diseased nervous sensibility that accompanies intense mental exertion, the weary, wasting sense of ignorance and vanity, the disenchantment and disintegration that commonly follow a profound research, have filled literature with mournful echoes of the words of the royal sage: 'In much wisdom is much grief, and he that increaseth knowledge increaseth sorrow.' The lives of men of genius have been for the most part a conscious and deliberate realisation of the ancient myth—The tree of knowledge and the tree of life stood side by side, and they chose the tree of knowledge rather than the tree of life."

Now, however much we may admire men and women who have so devoted themselves to the moral or mental improvement of their fellows, as to have wrought themselves into a state of diseased nervous sensibility, it is only in unmarried or childless married persons that such conduct is admirable, or indeed even justifiable. There is no duty to our fellows in general that can for a moment compare to that a man owes to the beings he has endowed with existence; and to work so immoderately as to bring himself, and probably in an intensified degree his posterity, into a state of "diseased nervous sensibility," is an extreme cruelty. Moreover, it must be remembered that by working well and moderately for his own generation, and bringing into existence healthy posterity capable and willing to work for their generation, a man will

No religious person, I believe, need fear that investigation of the "rules of life' laid down in the latter part of the Decalogue will lower his reverence for their wisdom. It will lead him to obey the spirit; not disobey the letter. We cannot conceive the time when murder will cease to be considered reprehensible in the vast majority of cases. It is never wise to attempt to frame universal precepts applicable to every imaginary case. We may, indeed, hope that the sixth Commandment will eventually lead to abstention from all wars of aggression; but whether it will grow into abolition of capital punishment, or whether posterity will consider it a paramount duty to preserve the lives of hopeless and congenital idiots, is not so easy to say. Yet we may safely prophesy that more sacred than the preservation of a wicked or a worthless life will be deemed the duty of not allowing a life that might be worthy to degenerate into worthlessness. It may be that "Thou shalt do no murder" will be extended to "Thou shalt not suffer thy life to become ignoble." The sacredness of property implied by the prohibition of theft will always be endorsed; yet more stress will be laid upon the evil of being a consumer and not a producer. Drones will grow to be regarded as true robbers. The seventh Com-

probably do more for the welfare of the species at large, than in so working as to bring himself and his posterity into a state perilously approaching madness. The great work of our generation has been to show how the qualities of ancestry are passed on in an intensified degree to posterity, and no theory of morals can be conclusive which ignores it. Utilitarianism in its narrow sense undoubtedly preaches only duties to self; but in the wider sense it sets before us as our highest aim the welfare of the species, but especially that part of it for which we are directly responsible, viz., our own offspring, and among the chief factors in that welfare is undoubtedly the influence of Heredity.

mandment, instituted for the sanctity of home and happiness of offspring, will develop, I believe, into a greater sense of the responsibility of marriage itself. It may be that as morality grows to be reasonable and ceases to be superstitious, this Commandment will be extended into "Thou shalt not entail upon thine offspring the curse of inherited moral or physical disease."

IV.

NATURAL GROWTH IN CIVILISATION.

"All superstitions die hard, and we fear that this belief in government-omnipotence will form no exception."

Essay on Over-Legislation by H. SPENCER.

NATURAL Law then, we have seen, has been the agency at work in the formation of the Solar System, so far as we know it, including of course our Globe. Natural Law has been the agency at work in the formation of Character, and in the growth of the Ethical Sense generally. And it is the purport of the present essay to show that Natural Law has been also the agency at work in the development of that highly complex thing that goes by the name of Civilisation.

That such a theory will meet with but small agreement I am well aware. What supernatural interposition is held to be in the realm of Nature, arbitrary legislation is held to be in the realm of Sociology. "Civilisation," it will be argued, has no connection with natural law. The "civilised" man and the "natural" man are antithetical terms. The savage is eminently a "child of nature," and being a child of nature he is therefore "uncivilised."

The "civilised man" and the "natural man" are no

more antithetical terms than are "child" and "man." "Man" is not the negation of "child"; it is only the development and outgrowth of "child." For a boy to grow into a healthy man it is first necessary that he shall have a healthy organisation—and this largely depends upon his ancestry—and afterwards that he shall have plenty of food and ample exercise. It is also needful that he shall be protected from unfair aggression; aggression, that is to say, of numbers of boys setting upon himself alone. If he be deprived of exercise, and allowed only food enough to keep life within him, he will grow up stunted and possibly deformed. If numbers are allowed to attack him, he will be killed or at least maimed for life. There is one other factor in the growth of a healthy boy that must not be lost sight of. He must be not only discouraged from unprovoked aggression; he must be encouraged in necessary and fully provoked self-defence. The pampered boy does not grow up so entirely stunted and diseased as the cruelly treated boy; but it is hardly necessary to point out that a lad who is encouraged to "run to his nurse" upon every slight attack from another of his own size, or when he has met with an accident through his own carelessness, will grow up enfeebled and contemptible.

With two exceptions there is a like analogy in the development of the savage into the civilised man. The first exception is that what in the one case takes barely twenty years, in the other takes generations. The other exception is that owing to the differences of climate all savage races cannot develop alike with the same average uninterrupted growth. The inhabitants of cold, sterile countries, or of those dwelling in the region of earthquakes, have greater

difficulties of environment to struggle against than the more favoured inhabitants of a temperate climate, and their rate of development will consequently be slower; but dismissing exceptional details, the broad general principle will be found to be true. There are certain savage races that seem as if they can never have any other than a transitory existence; so indolent that nothing short of starvation will make them work; such liars that no amount of forbearance or of punishment will teach them to be truthful. These are morally unhealthy: they may be fitly compared to the child of unhealthy ancestry; and in the long struggle for existence, they, or at all events their descendants, are sure to fail. But given the normal savage with no more than the normal virtues and vices of the average undisciplined nature, two things alone are necessary for him to develop slowly and naturally into the civilised man. These two things are Free Trade in Industry, or in other words, that he shall be permitted to enjoy the fruits of his own labour; and that he shall be protected from aggression; which protection, as the social organism reaches a certain development, must be supplemented by protection from breach of contract.

"But," I can fancy politicians of all schools will answer, "the history of a race is for the most part the history of its governments. No nation can progress unless its government be a good one." Negatively this is true; but only negatively. By perpetual intermeddling with the industry of its citizens, by repressive measures of greater or less stringency, the growth of civilisation may be terribly hampered. Undue taxation, by taking away an undue portion of a labourer's earnings, is in reality en-

forced starvation; and the citizens so taxed must grow as stunted as the half-starved lad we have been considering. Superstitious or secular intermeddling with a free exercise of his intellectual faculty will have as cramping and distorting an effect upon the citizen as prohibition to exercise his limbs freely will have upon the lad; and protecting the citizen from the consequences of his own folly will be fully as deteriorating as pampering and spoiling the child.

"But," I imagine critics objecting, "if only such a minute amount of legislation as is necessary for the prevention of aggression, and for the performance of contracts, be sufficient for the development and maintenance of Civilisation, what has been the advantage of our numerous legal codes, of our Acts of Parliament, of our different forms of government? And why, as amongst ourselves for instance, should so many of the wisest and best among us devote their time and energies, freely and without payment, to the service of their country?" Save in a negative sense, or, in other words, save for the purpose of undoing the mischievous intermeddling of their predecessors, I am afraid the answer must be, "Very little advantage at all," though I scarcely expect politicians to agree with me.*

* "In a paper read to the Statistical Society, in May, 1873, Mr. Janson, Vice-President of the Law Society, stated, that from the Statute of Merton (20 Henry III.) to the end of 1872, there had been passed 18,110 public Acts; of which he estimated that four-fifths had been wholly or partially repealed. He also stated that the number of public Acts repealed wholly or in part, or amended, during the three years 1870-71-72 had been 3,532, of which 2,759 had been totally repealed. To see whether this rate of repeal has continued, I have referred to the annually-issued volumes of "The Public General Statutes" for the three last Sessions. Saying

It is a trite remark that the looker-on at a drama, whether that drama be in real life or on the stage, sees more of the performance than the players themselves. And so in the ardent game of Politics, politicians, hot and vehement in their partisanship, are not those to whom I should go for a comprehensive study of the Science of Politics. The solitary thinker, the political economist, the historian who has some deeper insight into his duties than to believe that he should be merely a retailer of bloodthirsty battles or of the amours of sovereigns, above all the philosopher—these, devoted to the pursuit of Truth, rather than politicians, blinded and vehement in their search for Victory—are those I think to whom we should go for guidance in any comprehensive study of the history of civilisation.

I need scarcely point out that the great apostle of what I will call Self-help, against State help, is Herbert Spencer. His "Man *versus* the State," originally published a few years ago in a widely circulated Review, and subsequently republished at a popular price, has doubtless been widely read. Yet it must not be forgotten that the opinions put forth in this lately published book, are precisely those that Mr. Spencer has been consistently and persistently teaching for over thirty years. Forcibly put forth as are his views

nothing of the numerous amended Acts, the result is that in the last three Sessions there have been totally repealed, separately or in groups, 650 Acts, *belonging to the present reign*, besides many of the preceding reigns. This, of course, is greatly above the average rate; for there has of late been an active purgation of the Statute-book. But making every allowance, we must infer that within our own time, repeals have mounted some distance into the thousands."—"The Man *versus* the State," by H. Spencer, p. 50.

in "Man *versus* the State," it seems to me that in those early essays of his, "Over-Legislation," "The Social Organism," "State Tamperings with Money and Banks," "Representative Government," &c., he has expressed even more forcibly his conviction, that "the whole of our industrial organisation, from its main outlines, down to its minutest details, has become what it is, not simply without legislative guidance, but, to a considerable extent, in spite of legislative hindrances. It has arisen under the pressure of human wants and activities." *

"But," perhaps will be retorted, "philosophers are dreamers, mere *doctrinaires*, lovers of theories, despisers of facts; whereas, with the average Englishman, above all with the politician, one ounce of fact more than balances a pound of theory."

Knowing this love of Englishmen for facts, I intend to proceed with this essay somewhat differently from what I might otherwise have done. Instead of discussing the subject first from the *à priori* point of view—instead, that is to say, of arguing that when the State undertakes to do for its citizens what should be only done by the citizens themselves, the probabilities are that the work will be less well done by the State than by the individuals prompted to undertake it by the natural law of supply and demand, and afterwards proving *à posteriori* that this has always been the case—I will reverse this more usual method of treatment. I will show first by manifold details that, save for the prevention of aggression and for the insistance of performance of contract, all those other duties undertaken by the State, have been equally well performed by indi-

* "Essays Scientific, Political and Speculative," vol. i., p. 389.

viduals, and for the most part very much better; and I will afterwards show the general law underlying these facts—facts, as it seems to me, not admitting disproof. So far as possible I shall limit my attention to those classes of facts not very fully dealt with by Mr. Spencer, referring my readers anxious to have a wide acquaintance with the subject to those of his essays already mentioned by me.*

Let any average citizen—a merchant, a private gentleman, or one employed in some non-governmental position—rapidly think over the general circumstances of his average daily life, and afterwards ask himself how much of his general happiness and comfort depends upon individual effort, and how much upon State legislation.

He wakes, we will say, at half-past six in the morning, and hears his servants steal down quietly, for fear of disturbing him, to the commencement of their daily duties—servants that have voluntarily come to be hired, and that have voluntarily been engaged either by him or by his wife. The first bell he hears in the morning will probably be that of the milkman, who never fails to come at the proper time. Should, however, the milkman grow careless or unpunctual, our supposed citizen knows that he has but to dismiss him, and another milkman will promptly solicit his custom. There will be no difficulty in filling his place, simply through the natural law of supply and demand. Well, our citizen rises and commences to put on his clothes—clothes that were made at his own request, and requiring no State command—though had he lived some centuries

* I recommend also to all readers interested in this subject, the fifth chapter in the first volume of Buckle's "History of Civilisation," in which the question of Protection is admirably discussed.

earlier, the State certainly would not have allowed him to dress as he liked. He comes down to the breakfast-room. He sees his slippers by the cheerful fire, his "Times" on the table, his letters on the mantelpiece. Having finished his breakfast, and having read his paper—that newspaper containing parliamentary reports of the business of the previous evening; containing telegrams from abroad; full information of the Stocks and Money Market; law reports, and if there has been any important decision, a leading article upon the case—he goes out, for a ride on his horse perhaps if he is a private gentleman, or to his place of business if he is a merchant. He lunches at the nearest restaurant; on his homeward way he stops at Mudie's library, to bring home a particular book that he is anxious to read, but which does not owe its existence to any command of the State. He returns home to find his dinner ready for him; after enjoying which, he reads his book over his quiet pipe, and then prepares to start for the theatre or concert. One day is very much like another with him, and if, perhaps, we except the theatre and concert, his Sundays and his annual holiday, we may describe this one day in his life as a fair example of all.

Now, in this enumeration of his comforts and enjoyments how much has he owed to the State? Not an article of food has owed its existence to the direct instigation of the State, though perhaps some of those articles have been taxed, and so made his acquisition of them slightly more difficult; his house was not built at the instigation of the State, though he has to pay a tax upon it. I am not now denying the necessity of a certain amount of taxation, though I think it quite open to discussion whether such

absolute necessities as houses and food should be among the articles taxed. I am only asking the average citizen to consider whether if Parliament should not sit for a dozen years, and if there were only enough legislative supervision to ensure that he shall not be murdered or robbed, and to insist that he shall scrupulously pay for the things that he has ordered, would one of those articles we have enumerated among his luxuries and comforts be lacking to him?

"Yes," I think I hear some of my readers exclaim, "his letters. In addition to his breakfast, his bright fire, and his 'Times,' you said that when he came down in the morning he would find his letters awaiting him. And the Post Office is entirely under the supervision of the State." The postman does not call more regularly than the milkman, or the butcher, and difficult as is no doubt the organisation of the Post Office, I do not think that it is so difficult as the organisation of a great newspaper such as the "Times," which owes nothing to State interference. Still, the Post Office is wonderfully well managed; indeed of late years almost perfectly managed; and as this is the only thing under State supervision that is, as it seems to me, perfectly managed, I have been at some pains to collect data for a slight and necessarily very brief sketch of the history of the Post Office.

The germ of the postal system is probably to be traced to the necessity of some kind of epistolary intercourse between sovereigns and governments of various countries, and this intercourse would naturally spread by degrees to persons of greater or less importance. Couriers, or perhaps what we should call in these days Queen's Messengers, would fulfil, though of course in a crude way, the

office of postmasters. In the postal system of Spain and Germany, there is express record of permission to carry letters between individuals, though subject to very hampering restrictions and regulations; and there is one particular record of such a permission in April, 1544; which about fifteen years later grew into a legalised monopoly from which the Counts of Taxis drew parts of the profits as Postmasters-General. In France this sort of rudimentary post-office had even an earlier beginning. So far back as the early part of the thirteenth century a post-office was organised by the University of Paris. The first English Postmaster of whom there is any distinct account, does not seem to have lived before the earlier half of the sixteenth century. His name was Sir Brian Tuke, and in the year 1533 he is described in the Records as "*Magister Nunciorum, Cursorum, sive Postarum,* both in England and in other parts of the King's Dominions beyond the Seas." In 1607 the King granted to James Stanhope, first Lord Stanhope, the Postmastership of England, under the title of "Master of the Posts and Messengers," with a fee of 100 marks a year. In 1619 a separate office of "Postmaster-General of England for Foreign Parts" was created by new letters patent in favour of one called Matthew de Quester. But the new office was regarded by Lord Stanhope as an infringement of his own patent, and a long dispute ensued in the King's Bench and before the Lords of the Council.

But now the various quarrels between interested parties, coupled with confusion and irregularity in management, led a private individual—one John Hill, an attorney, to see if his own unassisted efforts could not bring about a certain reform. In or about 1650 he placed relays of post-

horses between York and London, and undertook the delivery of letters and parcels at half the former rate of charge. Even at this early date—just the middle of the seventeenth century—this enterprising attorney aimed at establishing a penny post for England, a twopenny post for Scotland, and a fourpenny one for Ireland. But the State, influenced by jealousy of its own interests, was too powerful for a single-handed attorney. The State then was under the Government of Cromwell; but I have yet to learn that the jealousy and selfishness of a Commonwealth is very much less than the jealousy and selfishness of a Monarchy. By each alike the Post Office was looked upon, not as a means of communication between citizens, and indirectly as a source of social and professional improvement, but first as a means of State revenue, and afterwards as useful, or indeed necessary, for purposes of political espionage. Cromwell's soldiers trampled down the new letter-carriers, and Hill himself narrowly escaped severe punishment. For some years the State control of the Post Office proceeded without further interruption, until, under the Government of the Restoration, Charles II., by Act of Parliament, settled all the profits of the Post Office on H.R.H. the Duke of York and his heirs male.]

Roused probably by this, and disregarding the fate of John Hill, William Dockwra, a searcher at the Customs House, assisted by one William Murray, a clerk at the Excise Office, were prompted to see if they could not do something to facilitate the delivery of letters. In 1680 Dockwra established a penny post in London. For one penny he undertook to carry, register, and insure all letters and parcels up to a pound in weight and £10 in value.

He established hourly collections, with a maximum of ten deliveries daily for the central part of the city, and a minimum of six for the suburbs. His management seems to have been admirable; but he was forced, through the jealousy of the State, to desist. Suits were laid against him in the Court of King's Bench for infringing on the Duke of York's Patent. Dockwra, however, more fortunate than his predecessor John Hill, escaped without any actual punishment. On the contrary, he received in compensation for his losses an annual pension, for a limited number of years, of £500 from the State Post Office revenues. Too much, however, must not be made of this generosity. By the following Table will be seen the rate of pensions paid down by these revenues to Court favourites, in comparison with that paid to the man who had worked so arduously and intelligently at postal reform :—

	£
Earl of Rochester	4,000
Duchess of Cleveland	4,700
Duke of Leeds	3,500
Earl of Bath	2,500
Lord Keeper	2,000
William Dockwra	500*

The first enduring impulse to the development of the Post Office owes its origin to another private individual, one John Palmer, a manager of the Bath Theatre. In or about 1782, his attention (very likely through unhappy personal experience) having been drawn to the numerous

* For this table, and for my facts generally, I am indebted to an interesting article upon the Post Office in the new edition of the "Encyclopædia Britannica" by E. Edwards and W. B. Cooley.

robberies of the post, which were so habitual that they had grown to be looked upon by the State in the light of more or less "necessary evils," suggested that by building mail coaches of a construction expressly adapted to run at a good speed, and by attaching an armed guard to each coach, the public would be greatly benefited and the revenue increased. The State, of course, resenting interference as an implied doubt of her infallibility, haughtily refused his advice, maintaining that the existing system was as perfect as under the necessities of the case it could expect to be. Lord Camden, however, brought the matter under the personal notice of Pitt, who, at once perceiving its merits, insisted upon its being tried. The experiment was made in 1784; and its success exceeded the most sanguine expectation. Nearly a million was added to the revenue. The State, true to herself—jealous, that is to say, of her own authority, and above all indignant at having been proved to be in the wrong—placed every obstruction in the way of Palmer gaining his deserved reward. Pitt, however, insisted that he should be made Comptroller-General of the Postal Revenues; but the place was made so exceedingly unpleasant for him by those jealous of merits that they could no longer deny to themselves, however they might openly deride them, that it was impossible for him to hold it. Ultimately, after various vicissitudes, he obtained a pension of £3,000 a year.

The improvements by Sir Rowland Hill, and the general history of the Penny Postage, belonging as they do to this century, are much better known than the earlier history of the Post Office. Still they are not known so fully to the general public, I think, as to make it necessary for me to

offer any apology for devoting a few pages to a description of its origin and growth. Before doing this let me point out that, just as the State postponed by her short-sighted jealousy the establishment of the penny post, so she did her best to hinder Sir Rowland Hill. By the public generally, and especially the trading public, his scheme was received with enthusiasm. If, without breach of the law, he could have tried it simply as a private individual establishing any other branch of trade, he would have begun it there and then, and its success would have probably been immediate; but it seems never to have occurred to him to act apart from the State. He merely desired to improve the then existing system through suggestions, and these suggestions were considered impracticable if not mad. In the words of the Earl of Lichfield, then Postmaster-General, "With respect to the plan set forth by Mr. Hill, of all the wild and visionary schemes which I have ever heard or read of, this is the most extraordinary." *

Let those believers in the perfection of State management compare the working of the Post Office as conceived and worked out by John Hill, or Dockwra, with what it was at the beginning of this century, when it was entirely in the hands of the State.

"If, when residing at Birmingham," says Sir Rowland Hill, in his "History of the Penny Postage," "we received a letter from London, the lowest charge was ninepence, while the slightest enclosure raised it to eighteenpence, and a second enclosure to two shillings and threepence, though the whole missive might not weigh a quarter of an ounce. We had relatives at Haddington; the lowest

* "Life of Sir Rowland Hill," by G. B. Hill, vol. i., p. 279.

rate thence was thirteenpence-halfpenny. . . . . The captain of a ship arriving at Deal had posted for London a packet weighing thirty-two ounces, which came to the person to whom it was addressed, charged with a postage, not of five shillings and sixpence, according to the rate proposed by me, but of upwards of six pounds, 'being,' as my informant observed, 'four times as much as the charge for an inside place by the mail.' So that had the captain, instead of posting the letter, sent a special messenger with it up to London, allowing him to travel inside both ways, and paying him handsomely for his time, as well as indemnifying him for his travelling expenses, the result would have been a considerable saving."*

But it was not only the price that was exorbitant, it was the mismanagement in every way, the waste of time as well as waste of money, that so peremptorily called for reform. And this continued even after a few improvements recommended by Rowland Hill and his able coadjutor and predecessor, Mr. Wallace, had been adopted. To mention a few of those inconveniences.

"As the day mails were so few," says Sir Rowland Hill, "most of the letters arriving in London by the morning mails on their way to other towns had to lie all day at the General Post Office; so that places corresponding through London, even if very near to one another, were, in postal distance, kept as far asunder as London and Durham; and when a blank post-day intervened, the delay was even more remarkable. Thus, a letter written at Uxbridge after the close of the post office on Friday night was not

* *Ibid.*, pp. 238, 276.

delivered at Gravesend, a distance of less than forty miles, until Tuesday morning.

"If two letters were put in the proper district receiving offices in London between five and six in the morning, one addressed to Highgate, the other to Wolverhampton (which lies one hundred and twenty miles on the same road), the Highgate letter was delivered last. The postage of a letter from Wolverhampton to Brierley Hill, conveyed by a cross-post passing through Dudley, was only one penny; whereas if the letter stopped short at Dudley, thus saving some miles in conveyance, the charge rose to fourpence.

"The absurd rule of charging by the number of enclosures instead of by weight, often caused great irritation, especially when any one of the enclosures was very diminutive. Thus, in an instance reported to me at the time, a certain letter from London to Wolverhampton, which now would be conveyed for one penny, came charged with a postage of two shillings and sixpence, viz., tenpence for the letter, tenpence for a returned bill of exchange enclosed therein, and tenpence for a small scrap of paper attached to this letter at the notary's office.

"On the poorer classes the inconveniences fell with special weight, for as letters almost always arrived unpaid, while the postage was often too heavy to be met at the moment, letters were sometimes withheld for days, or even weeks, until the means of discharge could be raised.

"The necessity for ascertaining the number of enclosures compelled the examination of every doubtful letter by the light of a lamp or candle placed behind it; and this inspection leading to the discovery of bank-notes, &c.,

which otherwise might have escaped remark, exposed the clerks to needless temptation, led to many acts of dishonesty, and brought much loss to correspondents.

"In addition to the dishonesty thus directly injurious to individuals, there were other frauds which materially affected the revenue. Such was the complication of accounts, that the deputy-postmasters could not be held to effectual responsibility as respects the amounts due from them to the General Office; and as many instances of deficit came at times to light, sometimes following each other week after week in the same office, there can be no doubt that the total annual loss must have reached a serious amount."*

To which frauds we must not forget to add the well-known abuse of the franking system, by which the well-to-do classes constantly evaded the legal postage. "It was found that the yearly number of franked missives was about seven millions; that those franked by Members of Parliament (somewhat less than five millions in number) might be counted nearly as double letters, the official franks (about two millions in number) as eight-fold letters, and the copies of the statutes, distributed by public authority (about seventy-seven thousand in number) thirteen-fold letters." †

But perhaps what nerved Mr. Rowland Hill to continue his reform in spite of all obstacles, more than anything else, was his conviction of the terrible cruelty a high rate of postage was to the poor. The poor, least able to pay the postage, were also least able to escape payment by the means of the franking system, for only such as were

* Sir R. Hill's Life, pp. 281—283. † *Ibid.*, pp. 321, 322.

acquaintances or relatives of the aristocracy could obtain these privileges. Again and again, as Mr. Hill's projected reform became widely known, were reports sent to him from philanthropists or from local postmasters detailing the misery accruing to the poor from the high rate of postage, which made it well-nigh an impossibility to take letters in. Very touching are some of these reports. Poor people in anxiety about relatives, offering various small articles of personal property for the privilege of opening a letter, because they had not the money to pay for the postage. Indirectly the evils were even greater; for the impossibility of correspondence kept working men in ignorance of the state of wages in different parts of the country; and thus they would often travel about the neighbouring towns and villages, hoping to improve their position, only to find this hope totally without foundation; whereas if the postage had but been within their means they would have written first to make inquiries, and thus saved themselves from the miseries of baffled hopes and unprofitable labour. Young, ignorant girls in employment fifty miles away from their parents, were, for all practical purposes, as far removed from parental guidance as if they had been at the Antipodes, and this want of communication often led to vice and profligacy, which might otherwise have been prevented.

So strong did the feeling gradually grow concerning the evils inflicted on society by postal mismanagement that there was some danger of philanthropists going too far. Shocked by the cruelties inflicted through an exorbitant charge for letters, they began to teach the unwise and dangerous doctrine that people should pay nothing for the

postage of their own letters, but that the State should undertake the carriage quite gratuitously. Happily Rowland Hill did not share these mischievous doctrines. He fought manfully in his determination that there should be no exorbitant charge for what in itself cost little; but he did not desire either the poor or rich to expect that benefits should be received by them which other people were to pay for. Carefully looking into the accounts, he found that the actual cost of a letter was under a penny; that a penny therefore would cover the cost, leaving a certain portion over for the Revenue; and if, as he thought probable, the greater cheapness of postage would immensely multiply the number of letters, then the State, instead of being a loser, would in reality be a gainer; while the convenience to the public would be almost indescribable.

There is no need for me to detain the reader further upon this subject. We all know that that project of Sir R. Hill that was at first denounced as so "wild and visionary" has proved to be an enormous financial success; and that the Penny Postage, partly because it was so ably worked out and fairly launched by Rowland Hill, partly because, by some fortunate accident, all our Postmasters-General have been men of singular intelligence and rectitude, is admirably managed, notwithstanding that it is under the direction of the State. Yet I have thought it right to recall to the reader the principal circumstances in the history of the Post Office, so that he may be able to see for himself that notwithstanding the undoubted present good management of the Post Office by the State, it would have been equally well managed, nearly two centuries earlier, had John Hill or Dockwra been allowed free trade

in their undertaking, and two centuries of fraud and perfectly preventible misery might have been spared. "But what would have become of the enormous revenue the Post Office brings to the State, had individuals such as Dockwra or John Hill been allowed its monopoly?" I fancy some reader exclaiming. Well, I am not urging, nor do I think it practicable at this late hour, that there should be any alteration in the direction and proprietorship of the Post Office; only it must be remembered that when Dockwra began his enterprising scheme, the revenue of the Post Office was utilised for no larger purpose than to enrich the Duke of York or the favourites of Charles the Second. Moreover, considered in the light of abstract justice, I cannot see that the State had a greater right to prohibit or to seize upon the proprietorship of the Post Office, because it promised to be an enormous financial success, than it has now to seize upon the proprietorship of the "Times" because that has proved to be a great financial success. Besides, it is not likely that Dockwra would have enjoyed the entire monopoly. Success always provokes competition. As other and cheaper newspapers compete with the "Times," so other letter-carriers would probably have competed with Dockwra. And, notwithstanding some serious drawbacks, the discipline of competition is on the whole a healthy one.

But I am afraid that the Post Office is the only office that with any justice can be acknowledged to be administered as well by the State as by individuals. I am afraid that in all the other instances I shall cite, the administration and interference of the State must be pronounced to be nothing less than mischievous; that citizens have

been hampered in their various pursuits by its senseless and unnecessary restrictions; and that until by long endeavour they had won for themselves Free Trade in their various industries, then and not till then could they perform their duties properly. Take, for instance, by way of our next illustration, the comparatively unimportant matter of Theatres.

In Appendix A. to his interesting work, "A New History of the English Stage,"* Mr. Percy Fitzgerald has pointed out how completely the management of the stage, almost to our own time, has depended upon the will of the Lord Chamberlain. That the Chamberlain's authority proceeded from the Sovereign alone is clear, from the fact that no Act of Parliament previous to the 10 George II. c. 28 (passed in 1737) alludes to his licensing powers, though he was constantly exercising them. The office records prove that between 1628 (when they commence) and 1660 the Lord Chamberlain licensed and closed theatres, interfered in the copyright of plays, and had complete control over managers and theatres. In 1662 and 1663 King Charles the Second granted the two well-known patents to Thomas Killigrew and Sir William Davenant for all kinds of stage entertainments as therein named, and by these two patents all other companies in London and Westminster were silenced. In 1682 the two patents were united by indenture. In 1695 William the Third granted a licence to Betterton to set up another theatre. In 1731 the Haymarket came into existence, then known as "Foote's Theatre," and in or about 1809 the Lyceum and Adelphi.

But now, within the short period of twenty years

* Vol. ii., pp. 436, 437.

occurring at the close of the last century and beginning of this, took place the well-known "burning of the theatres." Those (and they were many) who favoured "free trade" in theatres now felt that here was an opportunity not to be lost for making a serious attempt at enlarging the number of play-houses; and a Bill for this purpose was brought before Parliament. In its parental desire to protect the interests of its children, the State did its best to point out the folly of increasing the number of theatres, urging (not altogether unreasonably) that since the only great theatre that was then in existence was never full, was it likely that managers would be able to fill others? Was not the speculation likely to be an unprofitable one? And was it not the duty of the State to protect her citizens from foolish speculations?

But now, mark the simple but very pertinent interpretation given by one of the defenders of free trade in theatres of this undeniable fact that the only large theatre was seldom full:—

"The houses are empty from the natural incommodiousness of them. They may be occasionally and accidentally filled by the representation of a new play, or the performance of a favourite actor, but in general they will be deserted from want of accommodation. Unless these houses be totally altered, we shall not take persons away from them. In their present state they are certainly more fit for a Spanish bull-fight than for theatrical performances. If curiosity ever induced any of your lordships to visit the places appropriated for the accommodation of the humbler classes you would find that, looking down from the height through the vast concave, the actors appear like the

inhabitants of Lilliput. Not a feature of the face can be distinguished, far less the variations and flexibility of muscles, the turn of the eye, and graceful action. It is impossible to exert the human voice to that extent as to be heard in those places, and still to retain the power of modulating its tones." *

Well, in our own day managers have succeeded in securing, at all events, comparative Free Trade in theatres. And what is the consequence? Peremptorily urged thereto by the wholesome discipline of competition, managers vie with each other in making their theatres attractive to the eye, and conducive to the comfort, of the playgoers. The number of theatres has been greatly increased, and yet they are all more or less well filled. Occupation is thus found for hundreds, recreation provided for thousands, and managers are allowed to enjoy the profits of their own industry freely. Doubtless some of their speculations have been foolish. But the difference in the consequences of a private foolish speculation and a State-originated foolish speculation is that in the former the individual guilty of the folly is forced by the necessities of the case to repair his folly, or if he cannot do that, at least to see that it goes no further. Thus, if a theatre turn out badly, the manager immediately sets about some fresh arrangement; he alters the prices, or gets different actors, and so on. But if this does not succeed then he shuts up the theatre. That is to say, the misery brought about by his unsuccessful speculation (for all large speculations that have failed bring more or less misery) is of a strictly limited description, and falls

* Quoted by Mr. Fitzgerald in his "New History of the English Stage," vol. ii., p. 381.

principally upon himself. But the misery brought about by foolish Acts of Parliament is well-nigh unlimited. The State never repairs her mistakes immediately; and refuses tacitly to acknowledge that she has been in the wrong, by repealing her Acts, till she is forced to do so by persistent importunity. The misery thus caused is greater than meets the eye. In the first place, there is always a vast amount of suffering, conscious or unconscious, long before citizens are fully awakened to the realisation of their own misery, before they are prompted to rouse themselves to inquire into its cause and origin. With private individuals the discovery of the cause of an evil goes a long way towards discovering the remedy. But it is not so with the State. Session after session, year after year, will there be a petition that such and such a foolish Act may be repealed. Session after session, year after year, will the petition be refused. Take the history of the Anti-Corn Law agitation, for instance; a history, I am well aware, that is fairly well known; but yet in these days, when among interested parties a demand for what is called Fair Trade is growing, not so well known as to make it undesirable for me to recall to my readers some of its principal facts. First, as to the origin of the Corn-Laws themselves.

In the time of Napoleon, England and France were engaged in a war that lasted several years. During that period, the English, in addition to being greatly impoverished by the increase in taxation brought about by that war, were also unable to receive foreign corn into their ports. To add to the wretchedness resulting from these two causes must be added a third—one natural and inevitable—in the shape of a succession of bad harvests. The

English landlords, having the monopoly of corn in their hands, imposed upon the buyers a fancy price, and the poorer part of the population was well-nigh in a state of famine. But the war came to an end in 1815; taxation was less; foreign corn could again be admitted; the whole country grew more prosperous; all classes were in a state of comparative content, save one—the landlord class. Under the wholesome discipline of competition, the landlords could no longer maintain a fancy price for their produce. They brought in a Bill, therefore, for Protection, and, in a Parliament consisting chiefly of landlords, the Bill was passed with little or no difficulty. And thus arose the Corn-Law of 1815, by which all foreign grain was excluded save under a rate of duty that was practically prohibitory, until the market price had reached the sum of eighty shillings a quarter. Thus, too, the population found themselves plunged into almost a repetition of the famine they had scarcely recovered from, incidental to the French war.

Now I do not desire to identify this system of Protection solely with the Tories, though I think it chiefly belongs to them. Mr. John Morley, in his "Life of Richard Cobden," has properly pointed out that "there was no essential bond between the maintenance of agricultural protection and Conservative policy." Burke, the most magnificent genius that the Conservative spirit has ever attracted, was one of the earliest assailants of legislative interference in the corn trade, and the important Corn Act of 1773 was inspired by his maxims. "There is no such thing," Burke said, "as the landed interest separate from the trading interest; and he who separates the interest of the

consumer from the interest of the grower, starves the country."*

But though the Corn Law Act of 1815 was founded upon a misconception of the truths of Political Economy, I am afraid that the motive of the law was one purely of class-interest. Doubtless plausible excuses were pleaded, possibly—who can tell? since the human conscience is adroit at finding excuses for its own wickedness—believed in; but that class-interest alone was at the bottom of the law cannot, I think, be denied by any one who has impartially studied the facts of the case. As was well pointed out by one of the more unselfish among the peers, Earl Radnor, "The whole object of the Corn Law was to uphold rent. It was said that the object was to employ labour in the cultivation of land. Now, if that was the case, why was the produce of grass as well as arable land protected? There was a tax upon the importation of horses, and also upon the importation of asses. The importation of horned cattle was prohibited, and so were sheep and swine. Turkeys, fowls, eggs, milk, and cheese were taxed. There was not an article of food of any description which was not taxed. What could be the object of that but to put money into the pockets of the landlords? Not only the produce of the land, but that of the sea was also taxed. Now this latter was said to be done for the purpose of protecting the fisheries and encouraging a race of seamen. How was the fact? What fish was most highly taxed? Why, salmon—the fishing of which had nothing to do with educating seamen. Several noble lords derived from this tax as much as £4,000 to £5,000 a

* "Life of Richard Cobden," by John Morley, vol. i., p. 167.

year from their salmon fisheries. But what fish did their lordships think was exempt from taxation? They would suppose it was some ignoble fish; but it was no such thing. . . . . It was turbot. Yes, there was another fish which was not taxed. Was that a poor man's fish? No, indeed, it was a lobster, that their lordships might have sauce for their turbot. . . . . Hundreds of thousands of their countrymen were starving around them, whilst every animal upon the earth, and every fish of the sea, and every bird of the air, was taxed to prevent its coming to those famished people."*

It has, I think, been proved conclusively that even selfishly this Act was the reverse of beneficial. But suppose, for the sake of argument, that it were not so, was it morally right to tax all classes for the sake of one class? It seems to me that those who argue thus should remember that if this principle were logically carried out doctors might insist that there should be no good drainage, no knowledge of sanitary laws, because if all become healthy what will become of the doctors? Or lawyers might demand that there should be no instruction, no religion, because if all become moral what will become of the lawyers? That as the world grows morally and physically more healthy there will be less demand for doctors and lawyers seems to me certain. But what of that? These will simply have to invest their talent and capital elsewhere. Cessation of demand invariably necessitates cessation in supply. The effect of this Corn Law was to spread misery all round. Before it, the labourer received from twelve to eighteen shillings a week. After it, from eight

* Quoted by Mr. Ashworth, in his "Cobden and the League," pp. 74, 75, second edition.

to ten. The farmers did not prosper. Thus the whole question resolved itself into one of rent. But after a few years the landlords themselves began to suffer, because the rents could not be paid. But the difference between the labourers and landlords was this: that in the one case the family of a nobleman paid to the bread tax about one half-penny on every hundred pounds of income, while the labouring man paid twenty per cent. Thus it came to pass (to quote the words of a witness of the wretchedness) "that anything like the squalid misery; the slow, mouldering, putrefying death by which the weak and the feeble of the working classes are perishing here, it never befel my eyes to behold, nor my imagination to conceive. And the creatures seem to have no idea of resisting or even repining. They sit down with Oriental submission, as if it was God, and not the landlord, that was laying his hand upon them." *

Yet Nature had nothing to do with it. Had there been a famine, or a pestilence, or a great hurricane, the effects would have been terrible, yet they would have been short. But here for more than thirty years was there starvation throughout the land, that was artificially created, artificially continued. Thousands of barrels of flour were decaying in the United States for want of mouths to eat thereof; thousands of persons were starving in England for want of bread to eat. As Cobden succinctly pointed out in one of his speeches †:—"Suppose, now, that it were but the Thames, instead of the Atlantic, which separated the two countries; suppose that the people on one side were

* Quoted by Mr Ashworth in his "Cobden and the League," p. 37.

† Morley's "Life of Cobden," vol. i., p. 186.

mechanics and artisans, capable by their industry of producing a vast supply of manufactures; and that the people on the other side were agriculturists, producing infinitely more than they could themselves consume of corn, pork, and beef; fancy these two peoples anxious and willing to exchange with each other the produce of their common industries, and fancy a demon rising from the middle of the river—for I cannot imagine anything human in such a position and performing such an office—fancy a demon rising from the river, and holding in his hand an Act of Parliament, and saying, 'You shall not supply each other's wants'; and then, in addition to that, let it be supposed that this demon said to his victims, with an affected smile, 'This is for your benefit; I do it entirely for your protection!' Where was the difference between the Thames and the Atlantic?"

In 1846, after a duration of thirty-one years, the Corn Laws were repealed. And it may be added that, though the population has increased about 18 per cent. since that time, the extent of pauperism has been diminished by upwards of 25 per cent. Previous to the repeal of the Corn Laws, our imports of wheat and flour would average about three millions of quarters per year; at the present time they are from ten to sixteen millions. The importation of foreign cattle has now reached 200,000 head, besides 1,300 tons of beef, 800,000 sheep and lambs, and 140 tons of hams and bacon annually; and yet, in spite of this immense importation, an advance of 50 per cent. in the price of butcher's meat has been sustained.*

But what I want chiefly to insist upon is that all this

* Ashworth's "Cobden and the League," p. 261.

misery was artificially brought about by mischievous legislation. Had commerce been left alone by Government, had it been only allowed to run in a natural channel through the simple laws of supply and demand, thirty-one years of direct misery—and who shall say how many years of indirect misery, some of which we may even now be reaping?—had been spared.

And now, while I am upon the subject of Free Trade, let me plead for free trade in female industry. Has the State or have the professional classes any moral justification in prohibiting women from pursuing any honest occupation for which they have an inclination? I am aware of the two objections generally cited against the wisdom of such permission. The first is, that if women enter the professions they will become unfeminine; the second is that Nature has made woman mentally and physically inferior to man, and that therefore it is impossible that she should ever really succeed in the professions. As to the first of these objections, I would point out that it is an extremely difficult thing to draw a line between employments feminine and unfeminine. It seems to me to be an arbitrary distinction varying with each generation. Some time ago I believe it was thought to be a pedantry improper in ladies to spell correctly. About two hundred years ago Fénélon could thus write: "Women should be taught to keep their minds within due limits, and should learn to shrink from science as they would shrink from vice." Fénélon was a progressive man for his age, and had written largely upon female education; yet I doubt whether in our own day men, even with the most conservative taste in women, would deny them all study of science. All they would object to

is that they should be allowed to make any public use of the knowledge freely allowed them to gain.

Let us suppose, for the sake of argument, in answer to the second objection, the great majority of women to be really greatly inferior to men, has the State or have the professional classes any right to prohibit them following any occupation they choose? Just as much and no more than they have to prohibit delicate or incompetent men. If they are capable of doing the work well, it is unjust both to them and to the community to hinder the performance of good work. If, on the contrary, they *cannot* do it, why trouble to say they *shall* not? Does not the one involve the other? Nature has one all-powerful prohibition—Incompetency; what need is there of other?

To turn to another subject: State interference with the liberty of the individual, either in religious or medical matters.

To the student of human nature there are few questions more interesting, more bewildering, and to a certain extent more tragical than the history of the rise and fall of human beliefs. How or why they arise is not always easy to discover. Each different age has its own peculiar belief, and in some degree each different nation. One thing alone we can prophesy with fair accuracy: that however wise or foolish a belief may be, whatever difficulty it may have encountered at the outset to get itself accepted, yet when once it is accepted and fairly propagated, it will have tenfold more difficulty to get itself uprooted. One generation reaps what another has sown; and the belief that has been accepted with great difficulty and much hesitation by our fathers, becomes passively yielded to with no

difficulty and little hesitation by our children. Nor, paradoxical as the assertion may seem, must the mental superiority or inferiority of a man be gauged by the folly or wisdom of his beliefs. What child of ten, for instance, does not believe in the existence of antipodes? Yet Lord Bacon steadfastly denied its possibility. None now but ignorant boors believe in witchcraft. Three centuries ago who disbelieved in it? Even the most conservative of medical men would hardly deny now that the supposed efficacy of constant bleeding was more or less of a superstition; yet fifty years ago it was a belief almost universal.

Is there then no test of truth? At least its attainment is of such rare difficulty that we should be long-suffering towards those who differ from us. Propagate other opinions by all means. This we may rightfully do, since "he who only knows his own side of the case knows little of that." But here our interference should stop. Directly the State arrogates to itself a right to punish by fine or imprisonment non-acquiescence in its religious or medical injunctions, then, it seems to me, it is the duty of every honest citizen to remonstrate. For nearly a century persecutions have ceased for religious matters; but on the medical question of vaccination, a great deal of cruelty, I grieve to say, is practised towards parents, who having had, as they believe, their elder children injured by careless vaccination, refuse to submit the younger ones to a similar danger. They are in fact fined or imprisoned till they yield.

"But," it will be answered, "the State is forced to somewhat stringent measures here. The unvaccinated become a centre of infection to the vaccinated."

If vaccination be really the safeguard it is represented to

be, no infection can injure those who have submitted to the process. Jenner was so convinced of its protective power that on one occasion he inoculated with small-pox a lad he had recently vaccinated, and triumphed in the fact that even then the boy escaped.* On another occasion he took a child recently vaccinated to the bedside of a patient, suffering from the strongest phase of small-pox, and he was unaffected. Either vaccination is such a protection that the vaccinated have nothing to dread from their unvaccinated neighbours; or else it is not a protection, and should not be compulsorily inflicted. I see no escape from this logical dilemma.

"In things doubtful," Lord Houghton has somewhere said, "*liberty*." I am no strong anti-vaccinator myself; but, since we are often most assured of what we are most ignorant, I will confess that since I have studied the anti-vaccinator's side of the question, I am not so entirely convinced of the infallibility of vaccination as I was a few years ago. Is it quite certain that the diseases of animals (other than glanders and hydrophobia) can be communicated to man, or those of men to beasts? If I, recovering from scarlet fever, nurse a child, the latter is almost sure to take it; but will my lap-dog or my cat? The cattle plague, when it occurred some years back, infected thousands of cattle; did it infect their keepers? According to Jenner's most admiring biographer, Baron, his discovery consisted of vaccination performed in this way: Grease was taken from the sore heel of a horse, put into the already sore teats of a cow, and the lymph from the gathering naturally thus arising was put into the

* Baron's "Life of Jenner," vol. i., p. 138.

human arm. I was fourteen when I was last vaccinated, and have perfect recollection of it. The arm *took*, as the phrase goes, and so I suppose I had the cow-pox; but so far as my own sensations went I only had a sore arm.* I had no fever, no eruption (save on the arm), no loss of sleep or appetite. I was in all respects perfectly well. Vaccination has now had a fair trial for about a hundred years. Has small-pox disappeared? On the contrary, the epidemic of 1871 was a severe one. It has decreased no doubt, but the decrease had begun before the practice of vaccination. Measles and scarlet fever have decreased almost in the same ratio.† The decrease in these two latter zymotic diseases is acknowledged to be owing to the better drainage of cities, to our greater knowledge of disinfectants and sanitary matters generally. Is it not just possible that the same causes are at work in the decrease of small-pox? I am far from dogmatically asserting this to be the case; but I think it to be

* Jenner's description of a case of aggravated cow-pox in the cow:—"The whole skin with the exception of no part of it, from the base of the horns to the end of the tail and to the hoofs, was one continued disease, not of vesicles nor scabs, but a discharge similar to that produced by a blister. Even the nose and to the very edge of the lips were affected the same as the other parts of the skin. Every symptom of violent fever was present; no attention having been paid to that previous to my seeing her."—"Life of Dr. Jenner," by John Baron, F.R.S., vol. i., p. 352.

† Dr. Farr, on p. 305 of his "Vital Statistics," declares that "Fever has declined nearly in the same ratio as small-pox. In the three latter periods of the table the deaths from fever decreased as 621 : 264 : 114; from small-pox as 502 : 204 : 83." This slightly greater decrease is probably to be traced to our greater dread of small-pox, and consequent greater precaution in exposing ourselves to infection.

within the bounds of possibility. *Voluntary* vaccination seldom does harm, as will be attested by the well-to-do of all ranks. Lymph taken from a healthy animal or infant, inserted by a careful medical man into a person perfectly healthy at the time, brings about no ill effects. But whether diseases of animals can be imparted to man, or no, it is unhappily beyond doubt that human diseases can be propagated with fatal facility from one human being to another. It is next to impossible for the public vaccinator to perform the operation with the extreme care necessary to make it devoid of risk. Conscientious parents of the lower classes have been, and still are, subjected to an amount of persecution painful to contemplate. That their objection to it is not so unreasonable as is often represented, may be seen from the fact of the increase in the mortality of infants since the Vaccination Act. Prior to this, in 1847,* the mortality was somewhat less than it is now. The percentage of infants dying under one year old when vaccination became "obligatory," that is to say, 1855-65, was 11·841; and in 1870-75, when it became "enforced," it rose to 12·257. When we take into consideration the greater knowledge of sanitary and other conditions favourable to life, I need scarcely say the relative significance of these figures is greater than the absolute. If any careful student will impartially study the statistics of the decrease in small-pox, with increase in infant mortality, he can hardly fail to see, even from the common-sense point of view and leaving the moral aspect untouched, that the general advan-

* See Hopwood's "Statistics," published under the superintendence of the Registrar-General and by order of the House of Commons, 1877.

tages are hardly so great as to warrant the community being made to pay nearly £98,000 a year for its privileges, to say nothing of the bonuses, amounting to about £16,000, voted by Parliament for extra good vaccination. When we do come to the moral part of the question; when, that is to say, we take into consideration the number of conscientious poor parents who submit to imprisonment or to be literally fined out of house and home, rather than that their children shall run the risk of some ghastly disease through State vaccination; when, moreover, we consider the iniquity of compelling people who spare neither time nor money in exposing the evils of enforced vaccination to administer to those evils by paying towards them, we shall, I think, agree that the legislation which has brought about all this is not to be admired either for its wisdom or morality.

"Well," I imagine some of my readers retorting, "suppose we grant you, more for the sake of the argument than that we are convinced—suppose we concede that under the pressure of human wants and necessities man's material welfare can proceed unaided by the assistance of Government, man does not live by bread alone. He has a soul, and needs religion; he has a mind, and needs education."

No one realises more firmly than I do that man does not live by bread alone; yet none the less certain am I that if the State has hindered man's material welfare, she has in a still greater degree hindered his mental and moral welfare. I believe no one can read impartially a history of Christianity without being convinced that it was an unmitigated misfortune for her when she fell into the hands of the State. I do not deny that within her arms have

been found men of unblemished integrity, of exalted rectitude. But the integrity and rectitude of these men did not require the assistance of the State; whereas the evils belonging to the State Church could not have existed in any voluntary system, but belong solely and entirely to the fact of the close union between Church and State. I allude of course to the evils of non-residence, of pluralities, of the sale and purchase of livings; of the possession of family livings, in which the living was almost avowedly reserved, not always for the younger son, but for the most incompetent son—for the youth who promised to be too inefficient to earn his livelihood in any other profession. Nay, she has been the cause of evils far more serious than these. In the words of Mr. Buckle :—"For almost a hundred and fifty years Europe was afflicted by religious wars, religious massacres, and religious persecutions; not one of which would have arisen if the great truth had been recognised that the State has no concern with the opinions of men, and no right to interfere, even in the slightest degree, with the form of worship which they may choose to adopt."* I am not now pleading for any immediate disestablishment of the Church. On the contrary, it seems to me that, taking into consideration the immense decrease in abuses, the unselfish, hard-working lives of the large majority of our clergy, above all, the cry for still more reform coming from the nobler members themselves, never was disestablishment so little imperative as now. But it is quite possible to admit this, and yet to regret that in the first instance the Church should have fallen into the hands of the State. I have sometimes heard it cited by way of argument that

* "History of Civilisation," vol. i., p. 262.

the refined State-paid clergyman is a centre, or rather focus, of civilisation; a great agent in refining the poor and bringing them into connection with the rich. This I do not deny. But I have yet to learn that it needs "a scholar and a gentleman" to be paid by the State in order to keep him "a scholar and a gentleman." I am willing to grant that the majority of Dissenters are less refined than the clergy of the Established Church; but that is simply because they are for the most part taken from the lower middle classes, and their surroundings are less refined. Yet let me point to one small body, unendowed by the State, that are remarkable for their culture: the Unitarians. I doubt whether the most refined clergyman the Church of England possesses could exceed in culture and breeding such men as the Rev. James Martineau, or the late Rev. W. H. Channing. When we come to man's mental welfare, I am afraid here also I must point out that the influence of the State has been the reverse of beneficial. If I were asked to name the three great agents in the mental progress of man, I should say the Printing Press, the establishment of Railways, and the Penny Post. How has the first of these fared in the hands of the State? It has been hampered, restricted, kept down, till a cry for the "liberty of the Press" has passed almost into a by-word. When the Press by persistent efforts did at last win comparative liberty, the State injured her by a more fraudulent, because a less direct way, than open repression. She taxed books; she taxed newspapers; she taxed in addition the very paper on which information was printed. In a word, she taxed knowledge itself. And what are the advantages she has bestowed in com-

pensation for these manifest evils? For myself, I cannot name one.

When we come to Railways, we shall find that they certainly owe little to State assistance; though, on this occasion, it must in justice be admitted that the whole country was of the same opinion as the State. It was not at first a question of class interest, such as the Penny Post or the Corn Laws, where the country wanted one thing and the State another. Here the State really represented the feeling of the average citizen. Happy is the country when it does not do less than this! But what country, and what Government, from the time of Socrates to the present day, has recognised its greatest man? Consider, for instance, what are the country's representatives in an average House of Commons: a certain number of rich *parvenus*, who enter Parliament for the sake of writing *M.P.* after their names; a certain number of barristers, who enter Parliament in the hope of legal preferment; a large number of landed proprietors, of old family, who represent the several counties because their fathers did it before them; and a very small minority, indeed, who have an intimate acquaintance with political science and are actuated by a disinterested desire to work for the good of the nation. In a House like this how many will be likely to have any knowledge of the forces of Nature; any acquaintance with those great Natural Laws which, when understood by man, act for the most part beneficially, but which, when not understood or unheeded by him, bring about mischief that is irreparable? We can hardly blame the State for denying the capabilities latent in steam when great engineers, when celebrated barristers, when "Quarterly" reviewers all vied with each

other in pouring contempt upon the man who ventured to assert them. And yet I know no more impressive figure, no scene more worthy of a future dramatist, than that of George Stephenson, the uncultured genius, who was to revolutionise the civilisation of the world, pleading before the "collective wisdom" of his country for permission to make some further use of the instrument he had invented. What was called "The Liverpool and Manchester Bill" went into Committee of the House of Commons on the 21st of March, 1825. The wealth and influence of the opponents of the measure enabled them to retain the ablest counsel at the Bar. On the 25th of April Stephenson was called into the witness-box. The directors had previously begged him to refrain from so much as hinting before Parliament that his locomotive could go at a greater rate than ten miles an hour. In reality it was somewhat difficult for him to keep the engine down to ten miles an hour, but he promised to be prudent. Past experience had made him nearly as anxious to be prudent as the directors themselves. But he was uneducated, uncultured, and, like most scientific men, simple and direct. Vituperation upon vituperation was poured upon him. One asked him, with a sneer, if he were a foreigner (alluding to his Northumbrian accent); another plainly hinted that he was mad. He returned no vituperation; but modest and free from self-assertion though he was, he had withal that quiet self-reliance without which no man is really great. He said afterwards, when relating these experiences, that he felt that these barristers were questioning, not for the sake of getting at the truth (to impart which no man would have been more ready, more patient than he), but simply to bewilder him.

Yet the slight excitement naturally engendered by such conduct made him—not angry nor vindictive, for those qualities were foreign to him—but made him forget his resolutions of prudence. He began with his experience, beginning in 1803 as a brakesman at Killingworth, up to that present period, during which time he had constructed fifty-five steam-engines, of which sixteen were locomotives. Then, when warmed with his beloved subject, he confessed that he felt sure that a high-pressure locomotive that he was now constructing could go at the rate of twelve miles an hour. Here honourable members whispered to learned lawyers that the man must certainly be under a delusion! And too late Stephenson knew that he had been imprudent. Then came a series of trivial questions, aimed for the purpose of showing that the witness was wholly devoid of common sense, rather than to gain any information as to the question before them. Among them was this question*: "Suppose, now, one of these engines to be going along a railroad at the rate of nine or ten miles an hour, and that a cow were to stray upon the line and get in the way of the engine, would not that, think you, be a very awkward circumstance?" To this question the witness, not wanting in that sense of humour that belongs more generally to the philosophic and scientific mind than the world imagines, answered, with a twinkle in his eye, "Very awkward—*for the coo.*" For three days he was under cross-examination. He gave his scientific evidence simply and, for the most part, clearly; though when the cost of constructing bridges had to be gone into—that subject being somewhat new to him at the time, and he by no means

* See Smiles' "Lives of G. and R. Stephenson," p. 264.

adroit in assuming knowledge that he had not—wavered in his answers, implicity, if not explicitly, betraying his ignorance. His cause was lost, though by a very trifling majority. And he himself was stigmatised in wholly immoderate language.

"Who," said the leading counsel against him, "but Mr. Stephenson would have thought of entering into Chat Moss, carrying it out almost like wet dung? It is ignorance almost inconceivable. It is perfect madness, in a person called upon to speak on a scientific subject, to propose such a plan. . . . . Every part of the scheme shows that this man has applied himself to a subject of which he has no knowledge, and to which he has no science to apply. . . . Locomotive engines are liable to be operated upon by the weather . . . . the wind will affect them; and any gale of wind which would affect the traffic on the Mersey would render it *impossible* to set off a locomotive engine, either by poking of the fire, or keeping up the pressure of the steam till the boiler was ready to burst."

Thus the collective wisdom of the country!

But the committee of directors appointed to watch the measure in Parliament, urged possibly thereto by the fact of the very small majority by which the Bill was defeated, urged also, perhaps, by the increased respect the manly, honest behaviour of George Stephenson elicited from them, pressed on the measure again. I will not weary the reader by going minutely into the details of this second proceeding. Suffice it to say that the Act was at last passed, but the cost of obtaining it was £27,000!

But to show what was effected by this one man, aided by individuals urged to help him by no higher motive than

that of self-interest, let me quote the following passage from Mr. Smiles' "Life of Stephenson," p. 370 :—

"The following striking comparison has been made between this [the London and Birmingham] railway and one of the greatest works of ancient times. The Great Pyramid of Egypt was, according to Diodorus Siculus, constructed by three hundred thousand—according to Herodotus, by one hundred thousand men. It required for its execution twenty years, and the labour expended upon it has been estimated as equivalent to lifting 15,733,000,000 of cubic feet of stone one foot high. Whereas, if the labour expended in constructing the London and Birmingham Railway be in like manner reduced to one common denomination, the result is 25,000,000,000 of cubic feet *more* than was lifted for the Great Pyramid; and yet the English work was performed by about 20,000 men in less than five years. And whilst the Egyptian work was executed by a powerful monarch concentrating upon it the labour and capital of a great nation, the English railway was constructed, in the face of every conceivable obstruction and difficulty, by a company of private individuals, out of their own resources, without the aid of Government, or the contribution of one farthing of public money."

And again with the Midland Railway :—

"Compare it," says Mr. Smiles (p. 381), "for example, with Napoleon's military road over the Simplon, and it will at once be seen how greatly it excels that work, not only in the constructive skill displayed in it, but also in its cost and magnitude, and the amount of labour employed in its formation. The road of the Simplon is 45 miles in length; the North-Midland Railway 72½ miles. The former has

50 bridges and 5 tunnels, measuring together 1,338 feet in length; the latter has 200 bridges and 7 tunnels, measuring together 11,400 feet, or about 2¼ miles. The former cost about £720,000 sterling; the latter, about £300,000,000. Napoleon's grand military road was constructed in six years, at the public cost of the two great kingdoms of France and Italy; while Stephenson's railway was formed in about three years by a company of private merchants and capitalists out of their own funds, and under their own superintendence."

But now, before finally quitting this part of my subject, let me cite one more detail concerning the general dealings of Parliament with railways. I allude to what is known by the name of The Railway Mania.

The success of the first main lines of railway had created a strong speculative tendency; and in consequence persons utterly ignorant of railways, but greedy for premiums, applied for allotments which they could sell at a premium. Railway schemes were composed to attract the unwary. The Post Office was literally crammed with circulars and prospectuses. Pseudo-engineers, scheming lawyers, reaped an undreamed-of harvest. Surely, if State interference were justifiable at all (beyond, as I have said, for the absolutely necessary purposes of prevention of aggression and enforced performance of contracts) it would be as a preventive of these frauds. But in 1845 it was found that no less than 157 Members of Parliament were on the list of committees. George Stephenson a few years since had been denounced as insane for dreaming that his locomotive could proceed at the rate of twelve miles an hour. Now the scheming engineers and floaters of companies declared that their loco-

motives should run at the rate of a hundred miles an hour. In vain did Stephenson try to stem the torrent of the turn in public opinion. The State, capricious lady that she is, having endeavoured to restrict, to hamper, to denounce in every way the establishment of railways, now went to the other extreme. In 1845 powers were granted by Parliament to "construct not less than 2,883 miles of new railways in Britain, at an expenditure of about forty-four millions sterling! Yet the mania was not appeased; for in the following session of 1846 applications were made to Parliament for powers to raise £389,000,000 sterling for the construction of further lines; and they were actually conceded to the extent of 4,790 miles (including 60 miles of tunnels at a cost of about £120,000,000 sterling)." So long as the railway system was built upon sound commercial principles the State either denounced or ignored it; but when based upon the wildest, most fraudulent speculation, she honoured it with her encouragement. Stephenson, who had suffered sufficiently from her repressive mood, dreaded her far more in her present mood of pampering and spoiling. He wrote to Sir Robert Peel, complaining that "these Members of Parliament are now as much disposed to exaggerate the powers of the locomotive as they were to under-estimate them a few years ago." He publicly proclaimed his conviction that forty miles an hour was the highest rate that a train could run with perfect safety. For himself he preferred the very moderate rate of twenty-four miles. To conclude in the words of Mr. Smiles (p. 429): "The result of the labours of Parliament was a tissue of legislative bungling, involving enormous loss to the nation. Railway Bills were granted in heaps. Two

hundred and seventy-two additional Acts were passed in 1846. Some authorised the construction of lines running almost parallel with existing railways, in order to afford the public 'the benefits of unrestricted competition.' Locomotive and atmospheric lines, broad-gauge and narrow-gauge lines were granted without hesitation. Committees decided without judgment and without discrimination; and in the scramble for Bills the most unscrupulous were usually the most successful."

The history of the Penny Post has been already detailed.

Have I given enough facts in support of the theory propounded by me at the beginning of this essay? At least, I think I have given enough to show the grave danger latent in the cry now arising from politicians, "More State help; more State interference!" I allude of course to Free Education.

But before proceeding to the subject of Free Education let me touch slightly upon the subject of Compulsory Education itself.

Here let me first express my astonishment that the cry for Compulsory State Education should have proceeded in large measure from that Liberal Party who, in greater or less degree, were, if not absolutely inimical to the preservation of a State Church, at least fully conversant with the evils almost inseparably associated with it. Yet it seems to me that the arguments used in favour of State Education are not a whit more satisfactory than those for a State Church. Indeed, in one sense of the word they are less satisfactory. For the greater part of the Church revenues have another source than taxation; and, save nominally

(for I believe compulsory attendance at church, though long since obsolete, has never been formally abolished), persons are not compelled to go to church. But children are forced to go to school, however anxious parents may be to keep them at home; and thus parents are forced, even though they may be in a state of starvation, to pay their mite towards the expense, though they would much rather have the child at home; while the great bulk of the cost is chargeable upon other persons, many of whom have difficulty enough in educating their own children, without in addition being forcibly compelled to contribute towards the expense of educating the children of others.

"But," I imagine some critic exclaiming, "do you so undervalue education that you think it a matter of indifference whether children are educated or no; or is it that you are so narrow that you wish education to be confined to the upper classes alone?" I plead guilty to neither of these accusations. So far from wishing to keep the poor "to their station," as is the cant phrase, I hold that the station a man or woman is born to is that to which they can severally raise themselves by free trade in their own industry and intelligence. I would have every arbitrary artificial barrier removed either in the form of rank, religion, country—even sex. I would give every man and woman-child a fair field and no favour; and so far from condemning or despising the successful man because he is what is called "self-made," I would hold him up as an example worthy of admiration and imitation to the children still struggling in the rank from which he has succeeded in raising himself. Again, so far from undervaluing the advantages of education, I regard those advantages as so

undeniable, so palpable and ostensible as certainly not to require the somewhat doubtful compliment of making their reception a matter of compulsion instead of a boon and a favour. But the chief factor in improvement seems to me to be, not compulsory education, but removal of what may rightfully be called compulsory prohibition by the removal of a newspaper tax, and by the establishment of a penny post. Parental and filial affection are not less strong in the poor than in the rich. Indeed, judging by the large share of their wages—by servant-girls specially for instance—habitually given by the poor to their parents, I should be inclined to think that if anything it is greater; and the consciousness that if they only know how to read and write they will be able to communicate with their relatives at a long distance, is a great inducement to them to master the difficulties of reading and writing. Again, now that newspapers and books are cheap, the poor man is scarcely behind the rich man in his appreciation of them. Doubtless the literature is of a different class. But the labourer in his village reading-room enjoys his pipe and local newspaper as much as the fashionable man his cigar and "Truth" in his club, or the scholar his "Spectator" in his library. Remove all arbitrary prohibitions in the way of unjust taxation, and the natural laws of parental affection, of self-interest, in a word of supply and demand, will be more effectual than any compulsory education. Give a man an inducement to read and write, and he will learn to do so. But before the establishment of cheap literature and cheap postage, he naturally refused to trouble himself to master difficulties which when mastered would almost certainly prove useless; which in the course of a

few years would probably be forgotten simply for lack of practice. But prove to a parent that if he teaches his child, that child will be not only happier, but will be sooner off his hands and able to work for himself; and parental affection, coupled with self-interest, will make that parent voluntarily educate his child *whenever possible*. And it is just in those cases where voluntary education is not possible that compulsory education steps in and becomes such an extreme cruelty. Here is a case I cut out from the "Daily Telegraph" of November 27th, 1885:—

"THAMES.—SCHOOL BOARD PROSECUTION.—Amongst persons summoned at this court for not sending their children to school, was a wretchedly clad woman named Arnin.—The School Board visitor having proved the non-attendance of the child in question, the defendant, in answer to the charge, stated that she was a widow and supported herself and family entirely by her own exertion. Her two sons, aged respectively 17 and 15, were out of employment, and the reason she had not been able to send her little girl to school was on account of her having no boots or clothes to go in.—Mr. Lushington said he must fine the defendant 2*s.*, or, in default of distress, two days' imprisonment.—The officer: Have you the 2*s.*?—Defendant: I have not two farthings in the world, and no food or firing at home."

Here is another, from the same paper of February 8th, 1886:—

"*SCHOOL BOARD TYRANNY.*

"TO THE EDITOR OF 'THE DAILY TELEGRAPH.'

"SIR,—Permit me to state a hard case. A respectable woman, who lives within 500 yards of my house in Sydenham, in the street for which my wife is district visitor, and for whose respectability we can vouch, told me this morning the following story:—

"Her husband, a carpenter, formerly earned £2 and upwards a week, the whole of which he was in the habit of giving to his wife. He fell from a scaffold about two and a half years ago, and is so weak and unwell that he is not fit to work, except for light jobs, for a short time. The wife goes

out charing at 2*s.* a day. They have nine children. Two daughters are well married; a son has been away from home in a situation for three years. The eldest girl at home, aged sixteen, earns about 4*s.* a week. The eldest boy at home has a place at 6*s.* a week. Recently he has had two fearful abscesses, which have prevented him going to work. With a view of trying to keep his place his next brother, aged twelve, has for a fortnight been filling his brother's place, at a shop in Forest Hill. The father has been summoned to Greenwich, and fined 6*d.* and costs, 2*s.*, because this boy of twelve has not been at school. On the day on which this sickly man had to walk to and from Greenwich his wife could not come to my house, and so lost 2*s.*, and if the lad is made to go to school probably his elder brother will lose his place, and with it 6*s.* a week. My wife says their house is a model of cleanliness, and the children a picture of neatness. The earnings of this family are seldom in excess of 24*s.* a week. One quarter of this is threatened by the cruel law which will not allow the younger brother to fill the elder boy's place temporarily; the father is made to walk nine miles and pay 2*s.* 6*d.*, the mother losing 2*s.* while the husband is appearing before the magistrate. Of course I have paid the fine and costs; but is it any wonder, when such things are happening, that the poor hate the Board Schools? The only public relief this respectable family can get is by breaking up their little home and going into the Union. The man is quite unfit to break stones.—I am, yours obediently. "S. FLOOD PAGE.

"February 6th."

The cruelty of this case is so obvious that I would rather call the reader's attention to what is not so obvious, viz., that even in an educational point of view (in any reasonable and not superstitious sense of the word) the fortnight spent by the boy in his brother's place of business would have been by no means wasted time. It would be the means of giving him insight into an occupation that in a few years he will probably adopt as his own. More than this, if he show himself attentive and alert his employers would probably recommend him. And a lad, even with only a fortnight's good character, will have a slight advantage over an entire beginner. Thus education, which when

given voluntarily is a great advantage in the struggle for existence, when made compulsory—in other words, enforcing the letter and neglecting the spirit—becomes a grave drawback in the struggle for existence.

I fail to see how free education would benefit in cases like this. To me the crying evil is, not that parents should be forced to pay for the education that they voluntarily give their children, but that they should be compelled to educate them, whether delicate or strong, or whether mixing indiscriminately with children of good or bad parents should prove beneficial or harmful. In a word, I fail to perceive what right the State has to interfere with the sacred rights of parents, so long as they have done nothing to forfeit their liberty as free citizens by any criminal action.

Here I may be reminded that parental love is not invariable, and that legislative interference is chiefly intended for the protection of those unhappy little ones who have drunken or selfish parents. I am quite aware that parental love is not invariable. Whether this world is the best of all possible worlds I know not, but it is certainly not the best of all imaginable. This being so, some children will be blessed with greater parental love than others. But it must be remembered that affection for offspring is the rule, and lack of affection the exception, and to legislate for the few at the expense of the many, to legislate for the unworthy at the expense of the worthy, is an injustice, even if the State were likely to prove an efficient foster-mother, which seems to me the reverse of probable. It has been the purport of the present section of my essay to prove that nothing is so well done by State effort as by voluntary

effort. And most certainly, concerning the protection and succour of the poor little waifs and strays devoid of parental care, voluntary effort has not been backward. Look at Dr. Barnardo's Home; look at the Ragged Schools, founded, I believe, by the late Mary Carpenter; the Field Lane Refuges; the excellent work done by the religious of all denominations—all supported voluntarily; all doing good to the receivers; all doing little or no harm to the giver. In these schools there is no complaint of "over-pressure," no accusation of wanton extravagance. In the Board Schools the cry of "over-pressure" has unhappily been too frequent of late; though in justice* I will admit the

* In what seems to me a sensible and impartial little book, "Over-Pressure and Elementary Education," Mr. Sydney Buxton, M.P., has endeavoured to prove, and I think with some success, that there has been considerable exaggeration in the complaints of over-pressure. Having no practical connection with the School Board I feel myself at a disadvantage, and speak, therefore, quite subject to correction. So far as merely second-hand information warrants my coming to a definite opinion, I am inclined to agree with Mr. Buxton. Cases of over-pressure undoubtedly do occur; but taking into consideration the enormous number of children who attend these schools, the relative proportion of children suffering from over-pressure is not greater than at other schools —our own public schools, for instance. But the difference between the two cases seems to me this, that the parent can take away his child from the public school if he thinks fit, but he cannot from the Board School. In the one case a parent has a right to deliberate within himself as to whether the future good a boy may gain from over-pressure is not worth a little risk to present health. If a boy is going in for the Indian Civil Service, or the Royal Artillery, or if he hopes to be a Fellow of his College, it is worth while to run a risk that would not be worth while if he were simply going to be a clerk. But the withholding a child from examinations in Board Schools belongs to the teacher and not to the parent, and the mere existence of the Merit Grant would, I think, prove which way an ordinary teacher would be likely to be biassed.

possibility of exaggeration. But about the extravagance of the Board Schools there is, I fear, no exaggeration. The figures speak for themselves. Whatever the State does, it does expensively; and education is no exception to the rule.

"The last Government Report," says Mr. Arthur Mills, in an article on the "London School Board" in the "National Review" for December, 1885, "tells us that, whereas the average salary of masters in London Voluntary Schools was little over £152 per annum, that of masters in the Board Schools averaged over £257; while the mistresses in Voluntary Schools were content with an average salary of about £87, against £178 earned by their more fortunate sisters in Board Schools. And when we find that all the smaller items of ordinary expenditure are greater in Board than in Voluntary Schools, it is no matter of surprise that a comparison of the two classes of schools for the year ending September 29th, 1885, should show a very large excess in the former over the latter. As the results produced by the teaching power in Voluntary Schools are, as tested by the Government grant, practically equal to those obtained in Board Schools, it is difficult to explain this vast discrepancy in cost on any hypothesis consistent with careful finance on the part of the London School Board."*

* "The National Review," vol. vi., p. 567. To those readers who hold that much of the progress of this century is to be traced to the progress in education, I may as well point out how small a portion after all of education is State education. In 1885 the total of Board and Voluntary Schools were 18,895, of which 4,295 only were Board Schools.—"Westminster Review," October, 1886, p. 507.

The system of State subsidies began with £20,000 a year, and has now

When we come to Free Education, in addition to Compulsory Education, the hardships seem to me to be even

grown to over £3,000,000. Yet, in spite of this immense outlay, how seldom one comes across a girl or lad of the labouring classes who can spell! They can generally read; so I think could girls and boys before the School Board Act of 1870; they can write better, though still execrably from the scholastic point of view; but the spelling is of a most "phonetic" description. The following article on "Some Education Statistics" is from the "St. James's Gazette" of January 14, 1888:—"The final test of the efficiency of our School Board system is to be found in the examination papers of the scholars who successfully present themselves in Standard VI., and are thereupon released from obligatory attendance. When a child has passed Standard VI. he (or she) is supposed to be sufficiently well instructed for all the purposes Parliament had in view when it passed Mr. Forster's Act; and to be competent, at the least, in reading, writing, and arithmetic. The Code, it is true, aims at something more than this. It prescribes that before a child is passed in Standard VI. he shall be able 'to read a passage from one of Shakespeare's historical plays, or from some other standard author, or from a history of England;' to write 'a short theme or letter on an easy subject—spelling, handwriting, and composition to be considered,' or to write an exercise in dictation; and to do 'sums' in vulgar and decimal fractions, simple proportion, and simple interest. Moreover, each child is supposed to be instructed in one or more of the 'class' subjects, and in at least one of the 'specific' subjects. The class subjects are English, geography, elementary science, and history. The specific subjects include algebra, Euclid and mensuration, mechanics, Latin, French, animal physiology, botany, the principles of agriculture, chemistry, physics, and (for girls) domestic economy. Unless a child has reached the fourth standard, history cannot be taken as a class subject for him; and only two 'class' subjects are allowed to be taught to any child, one of them being invariably English. Furthermore, no child can be presented for examination in any specific subject who is not also presented for examination in elementary subjects in the fifth or some higher standard. These and other rules are meant to ensure that the scholars shall be well grounded in the Three R's before they pass on to the higher branches, and that no higher subjects shall be taught at all unless the school, as a whole, has reached a fair standard of excellence.

Thus it appears that in theory the Department discourages all teach-

greater. Hard as it is for a parent on the brink of starvation to be compelled to educate his own child, it is still

ing which might stand in the way of a thorough grounding in the elements of instruction; and we see that the examination papers in Standard VI. are the real test as to whether the intentions of Parliament have been fulfilled. If we find much bad writing, bad spelling, faulty arithmetic, and deficient intelligence in the examination-papers of Standard VI., we may know there is something wrong. If, in addition, we find all this in the papers of children who pass the final standard, we may know that the inspection is lax, and that the public money is being granted in aid of the education of children who are not being properly educated after all.

"We have before us a batch of Standard VI. examination-papers for a number of schools, giving the exercises in dictation, composition, and arithmetic. The percentage of 'passes' is about seventy-five; but the percentage of papers which show command of the Three R's is about ten. Certainly not one paper in ten is free from error; the writing is cramped and slovenly; little or no attention is paid to punctuation, capital letters, etc.; nearly all the dictation and composition exercises contain evidence that the writers have not understood the sense; downright mistakes in spelling are frequent; and the whole performance is extremely poor. Here are some specimens of the errors in orthography committed by children whose education is 'finished:'

Dircition (direction).	Enimy.	Lenghened.
Heir (hair).	Ramcart (rampart).	Baloons.
Chord (cord).	Peopl.	Buckel.
Steadious (tedious).	Probaly.	Slitest.
Rost (roast).	Probobobly.	Hedoge (hedgehog).
Spectecales.	Fising (fishing).	Edgeock.
Specteceles.	Pruving.	Hedgejog.
Specikles.	Himiself.	Hedgeogg.
Snak.	Thybone.	Hedgehawk.
Twiglight.	Tower (tore).	Eggog.

More specimens could be given if we had more space; and we take no notice of a multitude of common errors—the omission or improper use of the *h*, of single and double letters, of 'ei' and 'ie,' of 'as' and 'has,' 'is' and 'his,' etc. Can it be said that children capable of such work have been thoroughly grounded in the elementary subjects? Yet they

harder to be compelled to educate somebody else's children. As it is, compulsory education inflicts a tax of nearly ninepence in the pound upon every householder. When free education, and the inevitable outgrowths that are sure to follow, become established, it will be difficult to say what the amount of taxation will be.

In certain times of distress, that in greater or less degree afflict all classes alike, the class that suffers the most, as it seems to me, after the labourer, and much more than the farmer or tradesman, are the poorer ranks of the small gentry, the proprietors of schools for young children, of Kindergarten Schools, as they are called, or the struggling artist. And the cause is not far to seek. Neither contribute to the necessities of the various classes, but rather to their luxuries, and this in a somewhat poor and feeble way. The mother sends her little one to the Kindergarten, not because she is incompetent to teach it herself, but simply to be freed for a few hours each day from its noise. But when bad times come, and her husband cannot get his rents, or his investments turn out badly, and they are

have all been allowed to pass Standard VI., and, we doubt not, some 'class' and 'specific' subjects as well.

"The errors of grammar are on the same scale. Here we have again 'has' and 'as,' 'his' and 'is,' 'an' and 'a,' used indifferently and at random. The numbers are fearfully mixed up; and the feminine forms given to certain nouns are a wonder to see. Even more instructive are the exercises in composition. Sometimes an anecdote is given out orally, and the children are asked to write it down from memory; sometimes they are asked to write on any theme that occurs to them. The results are very curious; but we are precluded from entering into particulars. We can only state generally that not only are handwriting, spelling, and grammar bad, but that in many cases the children have clearly had but the dimmest comprehension of what it all meant."

obliged to retrench, almost the first retrenchment will be taking the little ones away from school and teaching them herself; and certainly the last luxury she or her husband will indulge in is to have their own or their children's portraits taken by the struggling young artist. The very wealthy classes, who suffer comparatively little from the general distress, are precisely those who do not employ small school teachers or struggling artists. Their mansions are so roomy that their children are not in the way; they have nursery governesses in preference to sending them from home, and they prefer that their portraits shall be taken by a distinguished Academician rather than by a nobody. Well, the distress in these instances is extreme. I speak from personal acquaintance with one or two cases in point. Rent is unable to be paid, cast-off clothing is as welcome as with the poorest labourer; and yet a certain position must be kept up, or the few pupils that remain would be removed. Servants are dismissed save one rough girl to do the dirty work. The mother buys herself a cookery book and teaches herself cooking; she unpicks an old dress, cuts out a new one by it, and teaches herself dressmaking; she gets up two hours before breakfast in order to teach her girls the piano before she has to begin work with the few pupils that remain to her. And yet all the time she is thus cooking and dressmaking and educating, a look into Whitaker's Almanack is sufficient to assure her that her husband is forced to contribute to the payment of three examiners of needlework, to a superintendent of cookery, to a singing instructor (to say nothing, of course, of the vast body of inspectors and teachers of other subjects), in order that the children of others should be educated. To add to

it all, four-fifths of the women whose children are being thus educated at the public expense are perfectly competent to teach them needlework and cookery—far more competent than the poor lady who has bravely turned her shoulder to the wheel in time of need—and are perfectly willing to do so into the bargain.

The same argument holds good throughout the whole of the Poor Law system. Money is wrested from us for the benefit of none but tramps and vagrants. Not a person save the wholly disreputable will enter a workhouse. I do not now mean decent servants or small tradespeople. Here prejudice might arise from social considerations; but the poorest crossing-sweeper, the half-starved seller of water-cresses, so long as they have an atom of self-respect left, refuse to avail themselves of the shelter provided for them by the bounty of the State. Dickens' portraiture of Betty Higden in "Our Mutual Friend" is not one whit exaggerated. Compare the horror of the poor for workhouses, with their gratitude for almshouses, for hospitals, for orphan asylums, for ragged schools, for free homes and refuges; and we shall see the difference between the benefits afforded by voluntary charity and enforced charity. Voluntary charity blesses him that gives, and (when properly administered) him that takes. Compulsory charity certainly does not bless him that gives—for the kindest-hearted among us pay our poor rates with no more benevolent feeling than we pay our gas rate; and even when it blesses him that takes—which is very seldom indeed—it does so in much less degree than voluntary charity, which brings rich and poor together, exciting at

the same time kindly feelings in the giver and grateful ones in the receiver?

Are these imperfections, these failures of State management, accidental, merely failures in detail? Or is there something radically wrong in the principle of State interference itself?

If I thought the errors, the various shortcomings I have selected of State management merely accidental, I should not have trespassed so long upon the reader's patience. Errors of detail in course of time often right themselves; and I have only dwelt at such length upon them in order to convince the reader of their existence before proceeding to what is in reality the true purport of this section of my essay.

Having registered the facts, let me now proceed to discuss the law underlying these facts. Briefly summed up, it is this: Civilisation is a slow, gradual development of the selfish and the social feelings proceeding *from within;* not an artificial system imposed *from without.* The radical defect of that Socialism which, under one name or another, is now dominant throughout Europe is that it treats society as a *mechanism,* whereas it is an *organism.* Society does not consist of a certain number of machines, into which, if a certain quantity of steam be poured, a certain amount of work is sure to be produced; but it consists of organisms, to which, indeed, food must be given—or, to speak more correctly, found for themselves—but the benefit of which food depends not so much upon the quantity swallowed as upon the assimilating power of the creature by whom it is received. Even with

vegetable organisms the kind of manure that will make one plant bear fruit abundantly will burn up another; the amount of water necessary to one injures another. But when we come to animal life the great factor in material and mental welfare, the great factor in progress, nay, even in possibility of existence, is the creature's own power of *discrimination*. This is the great factor that has enabled creatures of low organisation to develop to comparatively high organisation, which has enabled savages gradually to become civilised. What to eat, what to reject, what to avoid, what to approach; and with men, what is coincidence, what is cause, what is effect. And the greater power of discrimination—of knowing how to choose the good and refuse the evil—each animal, each man possesses, the greater likelihood that he will leave posterity to inherit, in an intensified degree, his own capability.

The two great factors in civilisation are self-interest and fellow-feeling; and the first is the stronger of the two in average human nature; though, as I have already pointed out in a former essay,* the development of the sympathies seems to me to have enormously increased of late. Still, that egoism has a slight priority over altruism is seen in the fact that the first question a young man puts to himself on leaving school is, "What shall I do to gain my own living?" not, "What shall I do to gain a livelihood for others?" It is quite true, that if he is not a rogue, and means to do his work honestly, he cannot benefit himself without benefiting others. Unless he do his work efficiently he will get no work to do. But for all that, self-

* Page 107.

interest is the primary motive. The milkman, the butcher, the baker, call at their customers' doors with the regularity of clockwork; but they take no manner of impersonal interest in their customers. The barrister, the naval or military man, the actor, the clerk, the author, when he does not write for a purpose, all are impelled to their various professions for reasons of self-interest. And the great guiding power in their selection is this faculty of discrimination. "What am I most fitted for?" asks the young man of himself, when he thinks of his future career. And then he adds, "Where am I likely to get on the soonest? Which of the trades or professions are least crowded?" In a word, he has to *discriminate* between what he can do and what he cannot do; between the offices most wanting him and most able to do without him. And in so far as he is able to exercise this power of discrimination rightly will he succeed or fail.

But just as the trading and professional classes cannot do good to themselves, without unconsciously doing good to their employers, so in many cases—especially where there is personal intercourse—there is a slight intermixture of altruism with this pure egoism; the good that is done grows to be conscious, and there is distinct pleasure in doing it. The cook, on first coming to be hired, has no more impersonal motives than the milkman in leaving the milk. But in time she becomes attached to a kind master and mistress; and if she is told that, because she cooked the dinner exceptionally well, her master, wearied and fagged after a long day's work, was tempted to eat his dinner, which, had it been less well cooked, he would not have been able to touch, she receives very genuine pleasure

And in my opinion those mistresses keep their servants the longest who make due allowance for the sympathetic feelings in them. Again with the dressmaker. Primarily, no doubt, payment and future recommendation are the motives within her; but if she has worked for the family for some years, she is distinctly pleased to be told that her young ladies had more partners than usual at the ball, because the dresses she made them happened to be particularly becoming to them. Again with the tutor or schoolmaster. He too works primarily for payment, and, if a pupil passes well, thinks first of the *prestige* it will bring his school; but if the boy has endeared himself to him by his industry and ability, it is with feelings of quite disinterested pleasure that he hears that the boy's future comfort is secured by having gained a Fellowship, or passed the Indian Civil Service examination satisfactorily. And when we come to the family physician, I need scarcely say that even delight in his own professional skill is hardly so great as his delight in having saved the life of an old patient, who is, more often than not, an old friend. Nay, even without this personal acquaintance, it is quite possible to have this feeling excited. I can speak personally of the pleasure it gives authors to hear that their labours have enabled unknown readers to pass away a few hours pleasantly.

But now, as we saw that pure egoism constantly becomes touched with slight altruism, let us proceed to the altruistic feelings themselves. Here too, no doubt, it is difficult to draw a distinct line. The consciousness of having done a noble or a kind action does no doubt give rise to feelings that are pleasurable to self. Still, speaking generally, just

as a profession is chosen simply from a view to self-interest, so benevolent actions are done solely with a view to the interest of others. The philanthropist has to sacrifice not only his time and his money, but he has often to be the witness of misery that he revolts from; the missionary has often to leave home and relations, and all the amenities of civilised life; the author, who, when writing on social and moral subjects, takes the unpopular side, knows that not only must he expect no payment for his work, but he must bear the cost of publication, and very often a good deal of severe criticism in addition. And yet in spite of all the penalties that disinterestedness has to bear, the amount of disinterested fellow-feeling and of unpaid labour in this country at the present time seems to me enormous. Even were State interference much less hurtful than it is, it seems to me strange, that in this century of all others, when there has been so large a development in the sympathetic feelings, there should be so great a demand for compulsory help. The necessity for it seems to me purely imaginary. Space would fail me to detail these charitable organisations at any length. Is there a famine in Ireland? Immediately donations are voluntarily subscribed for and sent over. Is there war in foreign parts? instantaneously come applications from devoted ladies to offer their services as nurses. Lint, money, food, even books and games are among the contributions. Or shall we simply confine ourselves to detailing the various modes of relief for the distress that is more or less permanent in our own country. Look at our orphan asylums, our hospitals, our institutions, our refuges, our rescue work. Look at Miss Octavia Hill, working for

the improvement of the homes of the poor; look at Miss Rye, devoting herself to the aid of Emigration. And then, by no means least, must be remembered that quiet unostentatious charity, which perhaps does most good of all, because it is least likely to be imposed upon—that between individuals. Who does not know the goodness of the kind physician, who at one time contents himself with a smaller fee from "a brother professional," at another remits a fee every third or fourth visit from an ordinary patient, whom he knows is disabled by illness from remunerative employment; to be followed by remitting fees altogether in cases of real distress. Who does not know the kind music or drawing master, who offers to give some last finishing lessons to a promising pupil, free of charge, because his or her parents could not afford to pay for them.* What kind mistress of a household ceases to take interest in a faithful servant, after said servant has left her service to be married, and comes to have little ones of her own? And then last of all, think of the fellow-feeling from the poor to the poor. Surely there is no need to imprison a hard-working widow for keeping her elder girl at home to look after the little ones. Voluntary aid is certain to compensate for the enforced absence. Even were there no good district visitor, no clergyman's wife or daughter willing to teach her at odd hours—a thing most improbable—the

* Even in my own circle of acquaintance—by no means a large one—I could name at least half a dozen who have done good in this way. And four cases are known to me of country gentlemen or clergymen, of the wealthier classes, educating poor children of more than average ability, at their own expense. All of which said children did well in after-life; one attaining a very distinguished position indeed.

child's own little friends of her own age would be only too glad and proud to impart to her the knowledge that they have themselves received.

Here I can imagine some critic interposing, "How is it that you who are so rigid a denouncer of State help should speak so appreciatively of voluntary aid? Surely, to be a consistent supporter of the *laissez faire* doctrine, you should consider all help equally hurtful. The inferior should be left to perish by reason of their inferiority; the superior to prosper by reason of their superiority. If State help is so hurtful, voluntary help must be equally hurtful. There can be no distinction between the two."

To my mind there is a very great distinction, which I can best express in the words of another than myself.* "*It is one thing to tell the rich to help the poor; another thing to tell the poor that they are to be helped by the rich.*" Indiscriminate voluntary charity has no doubt done some harm, but there is no need for charity to be indiscriminate; or rather, it is of the gravest importance that it should not be indiscriminate. And I think this importance is very much more widely recognised now than of old. In private life and between individuals, different persons can be dealt with according to their different characters. We hope to influence one by encouragement or by affection; in other words, we approach him only through his higher qualities. There are others with whom this mode is unavailing, if not ruinous. These we can only influence by leading them to fear the consequences of their actions. Providence can only be taught by refusing help; selfishness lessened by the apparent withdrawal of sympathy from the unselfish,

* I think J. S. Mill, but I cannot find the passage.

and so on. It is one of the many vices of State administration—at once inherent and unavoidable—that it can only deal with individuals collectively. And this vice alone—apart from many others—suffices to prove that voluntary help is effectual where State help is ineffectual; indeed, in many cases where it is pernicious.

That the poor should be helped seems to me certain. Even putting aside that fellow-feeling which has been nearly as necessary a factor in civilisation as self-interest itself, it seems to me that since the two vices largely confined to the poor have been almost created by artificial law, have been brought about by the selfishness or folly of the rich, the rich should look upon it as a simple matter of justice to do their utmost to remedy that evil.

I am not one of those who look upon the poor as more vicious than the rich. I am not now speaking of the brutal or criminal classes, of whom I have no personal experience; but the decent poor—even those who are half starving—seem to me to possess cheerfulness, industry, contentment, fellow-feeling, honesty (at all events towards those who have been kind to them), to an extent that might well be imitated by the rich. But they have two faults in a degree much greater than the average rich man. These are improvidence and lack of enterprise. But the first is more universal than the other. This improvidence seems to me the bane of the otherwise deserving poor; bone of their bone, flesh of their flesh; bred into their very marrow; afflicting the worthy and comparatively worthless alike. Does a young man get an extra day's wage? Is he selfish? Immediately he spends it in a day's jollification. Is he unselfish? Immediately he devotes it to relieving the wants

of some friend poorer than himself; and this, though he may have little ones of his own. Whether he has children, or whether he is childless, it is all one to him. The average poor man never thinks of putting by for the future. But will not past mischievous legislation fully account for this?* Look at the Middle Ages, when in the 230 years from Richard the Second's time, the poor-rate had grown to seven millions. Or was it likely that enterprise would flourish, when, as in France, the meddling and regulating spirit of legislation "disposed without scruple of the resources of manufacturers; it decided who should be allowed to work; what things it should be permitted to make; what materials should be employed; what processes followed; what forms should be given to productions. It was not enough to do well, to do better; it was necessary to do according to the rules. Everybody knows the regulation of 1670, which prescribed to seize and nail to the pillory, with the names of the makers, goods not conformable to the rules, and which, on a second repetition

* I am glad, however, to be able to state that this improvidence, though still, unhappily, of considerable extent, is certainly less than it was. With decrease in expenditure on poor relief, has followed increased habits of providence in the poor, as is shown by their investments in savings banks, in clothing clubs, and various other kinds of institutions for similar purposes. See a very interesting article published in the "Journal of the Statistical Society," December, 1883, on the "Progress of the Working Classes in the last half century," by R. Giffen, LL.D.; afterwards reprinted in his "Essays in Finance," Second Series. I commend this article and one on "Further Notes on the Progress of the Working Classes" in the same volume, to all those advocates of Protection who insist upon the miserable condition of the poor arising from the abolition of the Corn Laws. The facts being that not only do the poor receive the benefit of the importation of cheap food, but their money wages have increased about 50 per cent.

of the offence, directed that the manufacturers themselves should be attached also. Not the taste of the consumers, but the commands of the law must be attended to. Legions of inspectors, commissioners, controllers, jurymen, guardians, were charged with its execution. Machines were broken, products were burned when not conformable to the rules, improvements were punished, inventors were fined. . . . . An artisan could neither choose the place in which to establish himself, nor work at all seasons, nor work for all customers. There exists a decree of March 30th, 1700, which limits to eighteen towns the number of places where stockings might be woven. A decree of June 18th, 1723, enjoins the manufacturers at Rouen to suspend their works from the 1st of July to the 15th of September, in order to facilitate the harvest."* Had labourers wished to put by, could they have done so during the thirty-one years when the Corn Laws were in existence? Was it very likely that they would refrain from the pleasures of marriage, when its penalties were constantly hidden from them by the pseudo-religious talk of clergymen and district visitors (for surely true religion needs not the support of absolute falsehood), "that God never sends mouths but he sends meat"?

The consequence of all this legislative and charitable bungling is an amount of improvidence that is appalling; that can be only cured by kind and judicious advice, coupled —hard as it is to have to say it—*with letting the improvident man or woman suffer the consequences of his or her improvidence*, after it has been proved fully that mere advice has

* Quoted by J. S. Mill, in his "Principles of Political Economy," People's Edition, pp. 573, 574.

no effect. Free education will not do this; nor will any of the many socialistic schemes now afloat. Greatly as the State was to be dreaded in her prohibitive and restrictive mood, she is still more to be feared in her present mood of pampering, of teaching and assuring the poor either explicitly or implicitly that everything is to be done *for* them and nothing *by* them. For it must be remembered that when legislation once begins to interfere with the regulation of charity its original limitation is sure to be extended. The framers of the Code of 1870 did not foresee that Compulsory Education must necessarily lead to a demand for Free Education. And yet I have endeavoured to prove (and I hope successfully) that the cost of this Compulsory Education to the poor is but a trifling hardship in comparison to the necessity of procuring food, clothes, and some one to nurse the infants when the mother is away. Already has come a demand for Free Dinners; and for myself I would rather be forced to pay for a dinner which at least does the child's body temporary good, than for lessons which when the child is half-starved can do it no manner of good. Necessarily will follow that a sort of livery, or peculiar dress, shall be given to every child to wear at least during school hours; and that in each district shall be provided one or more *crêches*, so that the necessity of keeping an elder child at home to look after the little ones shall not be pleaded as an excuse for the non-attendance of such child.*

* In an able article in the January number of the *Westminster Review*, 1886, on "Socialism and Legislation," the writer draws attention to the fact "that certain Socialists say that the State should supply fuel in winter and ice in summer," referring as his authority to Gronlund's "Co-operative Commonwealth," p. 93.

Buckle, whose "History of Civilisation" I should like to see in the

Well; let us, for the sake of the argument, dismiss from our minds the cruelty and injustice of taxing A. to provide

hands of every Socialist, has devoted two entire chapters to a comparison of the Protective spirit as it was in France and England, drawing the inference that the greater stability and freedom of the latter is solely owing to the fact that *self*-help has been always regarded with greater favour than State help. Of France he says:—"Everything is referred to one common centre, in which all civil functions are absorbed. All improvements of any importance, all schemes for bettering even the material condition of the people, must receive the sanction of the Government . . . everything that is done must be done at head-quarters. The Government is believed to see everything, to know everything, and provide for everything. . . . In fact, the whole business of the State is conducted on the supposition that no man either knows his own interest, or is fit to take care of himself. So paternal are the feelings of Government, so eager for the welfare of its subjects, that it has drawn within its jurisdiction the most rare as well as the most ordinary actions of life. In order that the French may not make imprudent wills, it has limited the right of bequest; . . . in order that society may be protected by its police, it has directed that no one shall travel without a passport. . . . The people, even in their ordinary amusements, are watched and carefully superintended. . . . In their fairs, at their theatres, their concerts, and their other places of public resort, there are always present soldiers who are sent to see that no mischief is done. . . . Even the education of the children is brought under the control of the State, instead of being regulated by the judgment of masters and parents; and the whole plan is executed with such energy, that as the French, when men, are never left alone, just so while children they are never left alone. At the same time, it being reasonably supposed that the adults thus kept in pupilage cannot be proper judges of their own food, the Government has provided for this also. Its prying eye follows the butcher to the shambles, and the baker to the oven. By its paternal hand meat is examined lest it should be bad, and bread is weighed lest it should be light. In short, without multiplying instances, with which most readers must be familiar, it is enough to say that in France, as in every country where the protective principle is active, the Government has established a monopoly of the worst kind; a monoply which comes home to the business and bosoms of men, follows them in their daily avocations,

B.'s children with education and clothes and food; let us imagine that by seizure of the Church revenues, or by

troubles them with its petty, meddling spirit, and, what is worse than all, diminishes their responsibility to themselves; thus depriving them of what is the only real education that most minds receive—the constant necessity of providing for future contingencies, and the habit of grappling with the difficulties of life." Vol. ii., pp. 123—126.

Thus Buckle, writing of France in or about 1859. Had he lived to postpone his work twenty years later, would he have been able to draw a comparison between France and England so greatly in favour of the latter? Listen to Herbert Spencer writing of his own country in 1884 :—

In 1860, "The restrictions of the Factory Acts were extended to bleaching and dying works; authority was given to provide analysts of food and drink, to be paid out of local rates. . . . In 1861 occurred an extension of the compulsory provisions of the Factories Acts to lace-works; power was given to poor-law guardians to enforce vaccination; local boards were authorised to fix rates of hire for horses, ponies, mules, asses, and boats. . . . In 1862 an Act was passed for restricting the employment of women and children in open-air bleaching . . . as well as an Act giving the Council of Medical Education the exclusive right to publish a Pharmacopœia, the price of which is to be fixed by the Treasury. In 1863 came the extension of compulsory vaccination to Scotland and also to Ireland. . . . . There came the Bakehouses Regulation Act, which, besides specifying the minimum age of *employés* occupied between certain hours, prescribed periodical lime-washing, three coats of paint when painted, and cleaning with hot water and soap at least once in six months; and then came also an Act giving a magistrate authority to decide on the wholesomeness or unwholesomeness of food brought before him by an inspector. . . . In 1866 have to be named an Act to regulate cattle-sheds, etc., in Scotland, giving local authorities powers to inspect sanitary conditions and fix the numbers of cattle; an Act forcing hop-growers to label their bags with the year and place of growth, and the true weight, and giving police powers of search; an Act to facilitate the building of lodging-houses in Ireland, and providing for regulation of the inmates; a Public Health Act, under which there is registration of lodging-houses and limitation of occupants, with inspection and directions for lime-washing, etc.; and a Public Libraries Act giving local powers by which a majority can tax a minority for their

some other scheme not fully comprehended by me, all this tremendous system of relieving the poor shall be carried on free of taxation. Is it good that the poor, already sufficiently improvident, shall be encouraged in redoubled improvidence? For it must be remembered that it is not so much as contemplated that State Free education shall cease with the existing generation. It is to be a national thing. Every parent is to be encouraged to marry as early as he likes, under the complete certainty that the children he recklessly brings into the world will be educated at somebody else's expense; and (as seems to me certain in the

books. . . . We have, in 1869, the establishment of State telegraphs, with the accompanying interdict on telegraphing through any other agency; we have the empowering a Secretary of State to regulate hired conveyances in London; we have further and more stringent regulations to prevent cattle diseases from spreading; another Beerhouse Regulation Act, and a Sea-birds Preservation Act (ensuring greater mortality of fish). In 1870 we have a law authorising the Board of Public Works to make advances for landlords' improvements, and for purchase by tenants; we have the Act which enables the Education Department to form School Boards, which shall purchase sites for schools, and may provide free schools supported by local rates; and enabling school-boards to pay a child's fees, to compel parents to send their children, etc., etc.; we have a further Factories and Workshops Act, making, among other restrictions, some on the employment of women and children in fruit-preserving and fish-curing works. In 1871 we meet with an amended Merchant Shipping Act, directing officers of the Board of Trade to record the draught of sea-going vessels leaving port; . . . there is a Pedlers Act, inflicting penalties for hawking without a certificate; . . . and there are further measures for enforcing vaccination. . . . We have in 1880 a law . . . which dictates certain arrangements for the safe carriage of grain cargoes; also a law increasing legal coercion over parents to send their children to school. In 1881 comes legislation to prevent trawling over clam-beds and bait-beds, and an interdict making it impossible to buy a glass of beer on a Sunday in Wales."—"The Man *versus* the State," pp. 9-11.

future, should Free Education come to pass) will be clothed, fed, and their little ones nursed by others than themselves. Far be it from me to undervalue the benefits of education. But it must be remembered that book-learning is a tool or a key (though a most valuable tool, I admit) of knowledge, not knowledge itself. No amount of grammar and geometry stuffed into unwilling brains will compensate for lack of self-reliance, independence, judicious foresight—in a word, *discrimination*. And the best, indeed, in many cases, the only way of teaching self-reliance, independence, and foresight is by not interfering between an act and its natural penalty. "For education" (to quote Sir William Hamilton) "does not consist in the mere possession of facts, or in the simple swallowing of truths. It is not by the amount of knowledge communicated, but by the amount of thought which such knowledge calls into activity, that the mind is exercised and developed." And again, Montesquieu has said: "It is not always possible so completely to exhaust a subject as to leave nothing to be done by the reader. The important thing is, not to be read, but to excite the reader to thought." But it is only with the exceptional boy or girl, the exceptional man or woman, that book-learning excites thought. What *does* excite thought, alike in average and exceptional human nature—in all save the absolutely incapable (who, however great our compassion for them, should certainly not be helped to the extent of encouraging them in leaving posterity)—are the simple, natural consequences of our daily acts: How to get on; above all, how to get on our children. This latter difficulty touches upon the two great primary instincts of nature—feeling for self, love for off-

spring. On this side, the selfish parent thinks to himself, What shall I do to enable my son to earn his own living, and be soonest off my hands? On the other side, he asks, What shall I do to promote the future happiness of my child? Save with the solitary student, the genius, the enthusiastic scholar, who love their several branches of study simply for themselves, and with no other end in view —save with these few (perhaps not one in five thousand), all book-learning by all classes, from the lowest trade to the highest profession, is simply regarded as a means to this end: How shall I get on? How shall I get my children on? Remove this incentive; interfere with parental responsibilities, by removing them to the shoulders of the State, and the amount of thought that is alone called forth by the imperative necessity of adjusting actions to ends will be lessened, will gradually die away, will perish from lack of use. And then also must be remembered those pregnant facts underlying the law of heredity. A certain smattering of grammar and geometry is not inherited directly by child from parent; but the development, the increased capacity of brain that alone comes from properly exercising it, *is* passed on—passed on oftentimes in an intensified degree.

It is sometimes said that it is never safe to prophesy. Yet surely, if ever we may judge of the future by the past, it is justifiable in this case. To me, at least, it seems certain that just as laws in favour of industry injured it, hampered it, restricted it, till trade came to a deadlock—just as laws framed for the prevention of usury and for the lowering of the rate of interest increased usury and doubled and trebled the rate of interest, so certainly these new laws

(if passed), conscientiously framed with a view to the improvement of average intelligence, will end in deterioration and degeneration of the moral and mental faculties.

I have no wish to erect Nature into the position of the semi-idol that she filled in the last century. I am willing to admit that some of her laws are terrible, cruel, tragical; but it must be remembered that her prejudicial laws are the seldom and the occasional, her beneficial laws the many and the constant. Hurricanes, famines, earthquakes happen but rarely. In temperate regions, perhaps, not once in a century. Even death can only happen once in every life. But the beneficial laws of Nature affect us through all the simple everyday acts of our entire life. Natural Law says to every one reaching maturity, "Be industrious, be provident, and you will prosper. Show tenderness and justice to your children, and they will show gratitude and respect to you. Have fellow-feeling for others. If unavoidable calamities should overtake them, do for them as you would have them do for you. Nay, if they are not unavoidable, if you feel certain that you would have escaped them, judge them not harshly. Give them a "help-up," only first be sure that your present "help-up" does not in reality mean future "help-down." But Artificial Law, in its new form of Socialism, says, "Be industrious or idle, sow or leave unsown, you shall reap the fruits of others. Why refrain from the pleasures of marriage; we will ensure that you shall escape all its responsibilities. Be provident or improvident, be drunken, be lazy, your children shall be as well educated as if you were sober and self-restrained. Why should children suffer for their fathers' sins? The rich have abundant wealth. Force them to expend it

for the good of those whom you have brought into the world."

"Well," perhaps some demagogue of the extreme type will retort "be it so." By your own showing, the poverty and ignorance of the poor have been largely brought about by the tyranny, the injustice, or the folly of the State; and the members of the State are, or at all events were, the rich. Let the rich reap what they have sown. By unjust taxation they have condemned our bodies to starvation; by unjust taxation they have condemned our minds to ignorance. Let them now pay for the food our children eat, for the education our children receive. It seems to us right and meet that they should do so, since they have fattened upon our miseries."

I can understand the kind of crude justice such an argument must have with those who can only see proximate and not ultimate results. I hardly expect the average politician—whether he be village labourer or village squire—to have a sufficient knowledge of Natural Law to understand that the entire origin of the evils brought about by foolish legislation was its attempt to divert the natural course of events from its proper channel. But to divert it from one side is as foolish, as harmful, as to divert it into another. The utmost reparation legislation can make is, so far as possible, to undo the evils it has caused. And this can only be done by bringing back, at whatever cost, the flow of things into their natural channel. *This will not be done by interfering with parental responsibilities.* The ultimate result of this interference is not difficult to foresee—practically unlimited pauperism. The poor man, already sufficiently improvident, will be rendered

doubly improvident; already marrying in his twenties—where the professional man, in these days of competition and struggle for existence, postpones his marriage till the thirties—will then be tempted to marry in his teens; will probably select as his wife a girl barely emerging from childhood, unfitted both physically and mentally for the responsibilities of parenthood. Why should he not, when the State offers, nay, insists, that he shall be relieved from all responsibilities? Population, already increasing at too great a rate in this country, will increase at a far greater rate—a population be it remembered decreasing, if socialism carries the day, with every generation, by lack of practice, in capabilities of self-help. And then be it also remembered that since all faculties perish from lack of use, Fellow-feeling in the rich (if there will be any rich left) will also be greatly lessened, if not indeed extinguished. I have already shown that there is no conscious exercise of the benevolent feelings in our charities that are compulsory. The kindest among us pay our poor-rate with no manner of compassionate feeling. Yet the increased amount taken from us compulsorily will lessen by that much the amount we should otherwise give voluntarily. Or if it be said, the increased expenditure upon the poor is not to mean increased taxation—even then, since so much is to be done by State effort, there will be little or nothing left for voluntary effort to do. Either way, our sympathies will die out for lack of exercise.*

* State socialism must not be confounded with voluntary co-operation, the benefits of which none recognise more fully than I do. For an excellent summary of the invaluable advantages brought about by voluntary co-operation, I recommend the chapter devoted to Co-operative Institutions, by the late Professor Fawcett, in his "Manual of Political Economy," pp. 241—257.

I must not leave this section of my essay without drawing attention to another pregnant fact pertaining to it: that not only has the State greatly hampered civilisation by doing what she ought not to have done, in the shape of perpetual intermeddling; but in addition she has somewhat hampered it by leaving undone what she ought to have done. The great, and indeed the only function of the State is to protect her citizens from either explicit or implicit aggression. By explicit aggression I mean public aggression in the shape of aggressive wars, and private aggression in the shape of burglary, outrage, etc., down to street annoyance. By implicit aggression I mean breach of contract, which is but a somewhat indirect form of robbery. Yet so wretchedly does the State perform this office, that every one knowing anything of the law (unless urged thereto by a sense of public duty) will rather suffer wrong than run the risk of fresh wrong in the shape of waste of time and money. In the Essays of Mr. Spencer, to which I have already referred, will be found numerous examples of the mal-administration of the law. But these sins of omission are not simply coincident with, but the result and consequence of the State's sins of commission. "It is a law," says Spencer, "universally illustrated by organisations of every kind, that in proportion as there is to be efficiency, there must be specialisation, both of structure and function —specialisation, which of necessity implies accompanying limitation."

And thus it comes to pass that, just as we have seen that the State, by her sins of *commission*—by pertinaciously undertaking to do for her citizens what should only be done by the citizens themselves — has unconsciously

discouraged self-reliance and all originality; so, by her sins of *omission*—by making it so very difficult for her citizens to gain redress from aggression—really encourages dishonesty and offers a premium to positive vice. By attempting to do many things entirely beyond her province she leaves herself neither time nor ability to do the one thing well that should be done by her and none other.

Yet both by her sins of omission and commission is it not proved—what has been the object of this Essay to set forth—that Civilisation, like everything else in this our world, has proceeded by Natural Law; not by arbitrary interference, but rather in spite of it?

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LONDON: R. K. BURT AND CO., PRINTERS, FETTER LANE, E.C.

00068765

Digitized with financial assistance from the
Government of Maharashtra
on 05 October, 2018